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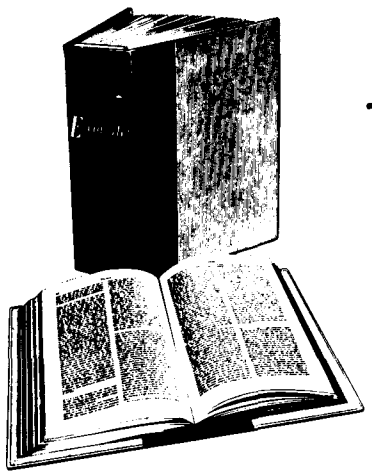

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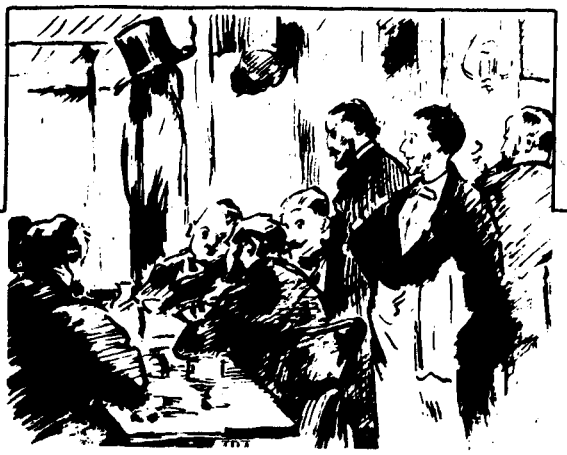

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Francis King

Beakie

LAURIS SQUINTED balefully out of the kitchen window at the smug, corpulent pigeons strung out along the fence separating her narrow Campden Hill garden from the even more narrow one of her neighbours. The neighbours, a childless couple called Donoghue, fed the pigeons, emptying out on to their dishevelled lawn not merely scraps of bread but lard, chicken carcases and glutinous mounds of rice or spaghetti. Lauris had first spoken to them and then, when she and they were no longer on speaking terms, had dashed off to them a number of increasingly acrimonious notes, which she would give to her eleven-year-old daughter, Charmian, to push through their letter-box on her dragging way to school. "Are you sure you delivered that letter?", she would ask when no response came and yet more garbage appeared in the next-door garden; and Charmian would then answer in a voice pitched high by wounded feelings, "Yes, of course, mummy! What *do* you think?"

"Wretched birds, wretched people", Lauris muttered, turning away from the window and seating herself opposite to her mother, Mrs Greene, at the kitchen table, the tea set out between them.

"Isn't Charmian going to join us?", the older woman asked. She often suspected that her daughter—so possessive of people until, on a sudden impulse, she jettisoned them as though they were clothes which, however serviceable, now bored her too much for her to go on wearing them—deliberately kept her and her granddaughter apart from each other.

"Homework." With her sleek head, Lauris indicated the dining-room next door. "She never drinks tea, as you know. But I'll put this macaroon aside for her."

"And a piece of this chocolate cake." Mrs Greene again bit into the slice which her daughter had cut for her. "Delicious."

It irritated Lauris to have to watch her mother guzzle (as she thought of it) almost as much as it irritated her to have to watch the pigeons do so. But she said, with genuine warmth: "Oh, it *is* nice to see you, mother. I wish you came more often."

"I wish you came to us more often. You know how hard it is for me to leave your stepfather."

"And you know how hard it is for me to leave the shop." To the family it was a shop, to the world a boutique.

Mrs Greene sighed. Then she murmured: "I wonder if I might have just another teeny. . . . It's so good."

"Of course." Lauris cut another slice, not teeny but thick, and held out the plate.

"Oh, that's far too big!", Mrs Greene protested as her hand went out. Having masticated for a while, her head on one side—it was extraordinary how much like one of those fucking pigeons she looked, Lauris thought—she at last ventured: "Is Eddie in?" Eddie was her grandson, Lauris's nephew.

Lauris shook her head. "Never at this hour. You know that, mother." Then she said: "I've been thinking—I'll really have to give him the push." It was, in fact, the first time that she had thought it; but having thought it, she was the kind of woman who at once took action. Thus on similar impulses she had, in turn, given the push to a travel journalist husband who had come increasingly to confine his writing to descriptions of his journey deeper and deeper into the wasteland of alcoholism; to a moony, etiolated Old Etonian business partner; and, most recently, to her jolly, dirty Irish char, Mrs Rooney.

"Give him the push! But why, Lauris, why?

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He's such a dear—and he can't be any trouble."

"Well, frankly, mother, he stinks. Literally, I mean."

"Stinks! He always strikes me as being, well, as clean as anyone of that age is ever likely to be." Eddie, a music-student, occupied what Mrs Greene called, because of its size and with no *double entendre* in mind, "the fairy's room", in return for some lackadaisical, inexpert help in the garden.

"He never changes his underclothes and it's all I can do to get him to change his sheets—even though the washing-machine is there, costing him nothing. He never opens the window in that room, even in a heat wave—too lazy to do so. He wears the same terrible pair of gym-shoes day after day." Lauris cut herself a piece of cake and picked it up and examined it. "He pees in the basin", she concluded.

"Oh, I'm sure not!" Mrs Greene was shocked. "You must be mistaken."

Lauris smiled mirthlessly. "Well, I admit I've not seen him do it. Not actually. But often he disappears into that lair of his as soon as he's gobbled his supper—no attempt to help me clear the table or stack the dishwasher, of course—and then doesn't crawl out until the following morning. So one can only draw one's conclusions. Admittedly, it may be that he pees out of the window instead of into the basin. Those geraniums were stunted this year, no doubt of that."

"Lauris!" Mrs Greene screwed up her face in feigned disgust. Then: "Eileen will be awfully cross if you ask him to go", she said. Eileen was her other, favoured daughter, married to a farmer in Devon.

"Let her be cross. Since she's in a perpetual state of crossness about something or other, that doesn't really matter."

"I wish you both got on better."

"I wish she hadn't married someone so dreary. Mine was no better admittedly, but at least I had the guts to give him the push."

Soon Mrs Greene arose from the table, daintily dabbing with a lace-fringed handkerchief at a crumb lodged in one corner of her mouth. "If I'm going to get your stepfather to the doctor, I'd better be off."

"Oh, do stay a little! I could run you back."

It was not so much that Lauris wanted her mother with her as that she could not bear to think of now surrendering her to the invalid fractiously awaiting her in Harrow.

Mrs Greene shook her head. "Sweet of you, darling. But you know how he frets and pines for me—even when that nice Major Mallory has come by for a game of chess."

"It's so nice that you find everyone so nice."

"Well, most people are", Mrs Green said, meaning it.

Through the half-open hatch between dining-room and kitchen, Charmian had been listening to the adults instead of getting on with her homework. What her mother had said about giving Eddie the push had appalled her, even though it had not been unexpected. But with the precocious canniness of years spent largely in the company of her capricious, self-willed mother, she knew that to protest would only produce a hardening of resolve, followed by a hastening of execution. She rose to her feet, a bird-like figure, with bony legs and arms, a beaky nose and an upswept crest of hair, screwed the cap on to her fountain-pen while deciding whether to go out or not, and then, at Mrs Greene's "Charmian! Charmian dear!" from the corridor, eventually emerged.

"I'm off, darling."

"I'll walk with you to the station."

"No", Lauris intervened. "You must get on with your homework." She did not want to accompany her mother herself but she hated the idea of anyone else, above all her own and only daughter, doing so instead.

"But I've awfully little for this evening. Miss Parker forgot to give us any and Mrs Strachan is ill."

"Oh, very well. But come back quickly. I don't want any wandering round the streets."

Charmian, who was fond of her grandmother, slipped an arm through hers as, side by side, they descended the steep steps of a house originally built for workers on the Metropolitan Railway. Lauris frowned down at them from the half-open front door. Then she called: "Goodbye, mother. Love to Pop." She had never been able to bring herself to call her stepfather "Daddy" or even "Father."

"Yes, dear. Of course."

As the child and her grandmother walked arm in arm down Hornton Street—"I'm afraid I have to take my time", Mrs Greene

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said, as always on these occasions—Charmian could no longer restrain herself. "Do you really thinks that Mummy means to give Eddie the push?"

"Oh, Charmian! Were you eavesdropping?" Mrs Greene tried to sound reproachful.

"I just couldn't help hearing. The hatch was open, you see."

Mrs Greene sighed, her grip tightening on the child's arm as she carefully negotiated a dip in the pavement. "When your mother decides to do something, then she does it. Doesn't she? Look what happened to old Mrs Rooney. Here today, gone tomorrow." She might have said: "Look what happened to your father."

"And only because she put away the saucepans without washing them properly."

Mrs Greene tried to change the subject. "You must get Mummy to bring you out to see us soon. Grandpop would so much enjoy that. Next Sunday perhaps." Lauris rarely brought Charmian with her on her visits to Harrow.

"It's not true", Charmian persevered.

"What's not true?"

"What Mummy said about Eddie. About his peeing in the basin or on to the geraniums. He can go for hours and hours. Really. Honestly."

"Mummy gets these ideas."

"It's the wrong idea."

Mrs Greene sighed again. "Well, if she makes up her mind to a thing."

"It's so unfair!" Charmian was on the verge of tears; and, realising this, Mrs Greene dipped into her bag and produced a pound note, as they entered the arcade of Kensington High Street station. "Buy yourself something with this, dear."

Charmian shrank. Her mother was always telling her how badly off granny and grandpop were and granny herself was always remarking that she had to "count the pennies." "Oh, granny, I couldn't, I couldn't!"

"Of course, you can. Don't be silly! I'm sorry it's not more. Grandpop told me to give it to you", Mrs Greene lied. "He got an unexpected cheque this morning—a dividend."

Reluctantly Charmian took the note and slipped it into the pocket of her anorak.

"Now don't lose it!"

"Oh, no, granny!"

Charmian stood, hands in the pockets of her anorak, and watched her grandmother as, handbag dangling from one wrist and a Marks and Spencer shopping-bag dangling from the other, she edged her way through the barrier. Turning once to call out, over the heads of the people behind her, "Bye, darling!", Mrs Greene disappeared from sight. But Charmian stayed on, her shoulders hunched and her eyes peering astigmatically from behind the glasses which her mother was always telling her that she really *must* give up for contact lenses.

MR DONOGHUE emerged on the crest of the next wave of passengers and gave Charmian a little nod of the head, as though he were one of the pigeons pecking at some offering in his garden, and a murmured "Good evening" before he hurried on, a brief-case, ER II stamped on its cracked leather in faded gold, swinging from a hand. He and his wife were always saying that they had nothing against that wretched, downtrodden child, it was the mother who was such a pain in the neck. Two schoolboys, in identical blue blazers with gold buttons, stopped beside her on the pretext of staring into the window of a shop selling handbags. One of them then turned and said something to her, which, by willing herself not to hear, Charmian somehow managed to make inaudible. She tossed her head to one side, blushing. Both boys giggled and sauntered on.

At last what she had been waiting for happened. Eddie appeared, with the shabby black case containing his flute under one arm and his tweed jacket over the other. He was wearing a cap with a peak which seemed far too big for the wan, triangular-shaped face beneath it, a striped shirt fastened at the collar with a stud but tieless, and extremely narrow trousers supported by braces.

"Oh, Eddie!", Charmian cried out.

"What are you doing here?" he asked, not really interested in knowing.

"I came down here with granny. She was sorry to miss you, she was asking where you were."

"She knows I'm always at school on a Thursday afternoon. Today I'm back home earlier than usual."

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"Oh, I hoped you'd be, I hoped you'd be!", Charmian wanted to tell him; but instead she asked: "Did you have a successful day?" It was what her mother used to ask her father when he got home, until it became clear that none of his days, passed in one Fleet Street pub after another, could ever be successful.

Eddie shrugged. "Oh, a day like any other day. I'm going to a concert tonight", he volunteered, as they now emerged from the arcade. "Susie managed to get two free tickets out of her uncle. The Barbican. I don't know if I can really bear to hear the Elgar Cello Concerto for the umpteenth time but they're also going to do. . . ."

Charmian had ceased to listen. Susie! Though she had never met her, she hated her. Perhaps, if Mummy persisted in her idea of giving Eddie the push, he and Susie would then live together. Susie's parents were rich, her uncle was a famous pianist. Susie could pay the rent for the two of them.

"Mummy seems to be in one of her moods", Charmian said. This was the nearest she could get to mentioning the actual threat.

Eddie seemed not to hear her, as he trudged on up Hornton Street, always a little before her, his head bowed under that ridiculous cap of his, his jacket now swinging by its tab from the crooked middle finger of his left hand, and a soft whistling emerging from between his pursed lips.

"Mummy seems to be in one of her moods", Charmian repeated.

He turned. "Oh, is she? Well, we'll soon charm her out of that." The sad thing was that Eddie had no charm; and, though she loved him, Charmian was precocious enough to know it.

CHARMIAN LAY stretched out on the bed, now stripped of its bedclothes, and, eyes fixed on the damp-stain which darkened the wallpaper in front of her, cried and cried and cried. Tugging off sheets and blankets earlier that day, Lauris had exclaimed, "God, what a smell!" But that smell, lingering on in the fairy's room despite the window which Lauris had thrown open, now only intensified Charmian's grief. It was Saturday, her mother was at the shop.

Chairman remembered another, no less poignant smell in this room, after her father had first been banished to it and then been banished from it to the Notting Hill Gate bed-sitter which had become merely a staging-post on his way to the hospital in which he was now confined. "May we go and see Daddy?", Charmian had asked persistently at first and, stonily obdurate, Lauris had always, in effect, given the same reply: "No point. He no longer recognises people. That's what drink does to the brain in the end."

Daddy, Eddie: would she ever see either of them again? Charmian put out a hand and, with the nail of the forefinger, scratched at the damp-patch until it achieved the colour and consistency of wet, yellow blotting-paper. Her mother, when she noticed the mess, would be furious; but she would think Eddie to be responsible.

"Why, why, why does he have to go?", Charmian had demanded; but the intensity of her concern had, as she had all along feared, only served to confirm her mother in her resolve. Lauris had answered: "Because it's better for him and better for us." "How better?", Charmian had demanded and Lauris, at a loss to answer that, had said: "Now Charmian! That's enough. Quite enough."

It was the first time that Charmian had lain on that bed since Eddie's arrival, though she had often lain on it in her first desolation at the departure of her father. In all the months of Eddie's occupancy, she had never even sat on it, as he would do, preferring it to a chair despite all Lauris's protests that he would ruin the springs. At the sound of the flute, Charmian would gently knock and then open the door before being told to do so. "May I listen?", she would ask of him, as he looked up at her, in the striped flannel pyjamas which he wore at home even in daytime, the flute between the fingers which to Lauris always looked grubby and greasy. "Listen to what? I'm only doing some boring old exercises." He would go on with the exercises, as though she were not there, and she would stand, her hands resting against the lintel of the half-open door and her slack body resting against her hands until they grew numb. Sometimes, if she were at home, Lauris would eventually call out irritably: "Oh, do shut that door, Eddie! I can do without that noise. I'm trying to work at my V.A.T." and then Charmian, glad of the pretext, would slip into the narrow, high-ceil-

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inged room, which had been built on, with the cloakroom below it, as an extension to the original late Victorian cottage.

"I'd like to learn the flute", Charmian ventured on one occasion.

"Hopeless. You've no ear, no ear at all", Eddie retorted loftily. "You can't carry the simplest tune. Like your mother."

"But I *like* music."

Eddie shrugged.

"The kind of music you make", Charmian qualified. "It's like—like a bird singing."

CHARMIAN WOULD LINGER on in the kitchen, a morsel of bread still on her plate and a finger of cold tea still in her cup, and would wait for the sound of Eddie emerging from his room. She would be late for school but she did not care. Lauris was already at the shop. "Are you leaving, Eddie?" He would grunt in answer. "Then I'll walk with you", she would volunteer. "Oh, all right, in that case you can carry these shoes for me. I have to take them to be mended. Your mother's always telling me that the sole is coming loose on the left foot."

In this room, grey and damp, Eddie had lain coughing and sneezing. "Don't go near him!", Lauris had ordered Charmian. "It's just this 'flu which everyone is getting. He can look after himself. I don't want you to get it and to give it to me." But when Lauris had set off for the shop, Charmian had prepared a tray. "Here", she had said, "I've made you a pot of tea and some toast. I could boil you an egg if you wanted one."

"No, I don't." At that, he sneezed so violently that a projectile of catarrh spattered the wall beside his bed. "Oh, Christ!" He dabbed at it with a handkerchief, already too damp to be effective. "What I'd really like is something to drink. Some of the hard stuff, I mean."

"Whisky?"

"Why not?"

Lauris kept the drinks cupboard locked, from a habit acquired when her husband was still around; but Charmian knew that the key lay under some luggage labels in one of the small drawers of her secretaire. She fetched the key—oh, God, don't let mummy come back yet!—unlocked the cupboard and, with a trembling hand, poured out the whisky. "Super!", Eddie exclaimed, having gulped at it. Later, Lauris commented that old Mrs Rooney seemed to have been up to her old tricks again, helping herself to the booze.

Charmian herself got the 'flu soon after Eddie was up and about again. He once put his head round the door of her bedroom to ask how she was. Otherwise he never came near her.

"Where are you going to live now?", she had asked.

"Well, to begin with, I'm going to join up with some friends in a squat in Clapham. Students. A couple."

Well, at least he was not going to live with Susie, as she had feared. "I wish . . . I wish mummy hadn't decided to turn this room into a garden-room." That was Lauris's excuse for giving the push to Eddie: she had always planned to make the fairy's room into a garden-room and now, with business picking up since she had given the push to that Old Etonian twit, she found that she could just afford to do so. Charmian shrank from telling Eddie that this was all a lie; she did not wish to cause him any hurt.

"It won't get any sun. Faces north", Eddie said. "Look at the damp." He pointed to the patch at which Charmian would later scrape with a finger-nail in tearful desolation. "I only put up with a hovel like this because I got it rent-free."

"May I visit you in Clapham?"

"It's a long way", was Eddie's only answer.

Charmian was still lying on the bed, her cheek pressed to the mattress and one hand trailing to the linoleum-covered floor, when Lauris returned from the shop. "Charmian!", Lauris called. She was in a good mood.

"Yes, mummy!" Charmian scrambled off the bed; but she was not quick enough in leaving the room.

"What on earth are you doing in there?"

"I was looking to see . . . to see how it would become a garden-room."

Lauris laughed, her sturdy legs apart and a hand on her hip. "It's not really going to be a garden-room, lovey. But I didn't want to hurt poor old Eddie's feelings—or to annoy your dear Aunt Eileen more than I do in any case."

CURIOUSLY, Lauris was soon missing Eddie, as she had never missed her

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flushed, stumbling, incoherent husband after giving him the push. "It seems odd not to have Eddie around", she said a few days later, as she and Charmian sat facing each other at supper, with no Eddie silently wolfing his food between them.

"The house doesn't seem to be the same", Charmian concurred, feeling herself to be on the verge of tears.

Lauris rallied herself. "No, thank God!", she exclaimed. "Though the stink, like the melody, lingers on."

Charmian wanted to jump up from the table and flee to her own room; but she controlled the impulse. "It's . . . lonely."

"Lonely!"

"For me."

"That's a nice thing to say, when you have your mother for company. Lonely! Yes, that's a nice thing to say."

In the bleak days which followed, Charmian would often venture into the fairy's room when her mother was out; but she never again threw herself on to the bed and she never again succumbed to that first wild, noisy paroxysm of grief. Instead, she would stand in the doorway, a hand on the doorknob, and she would will herself to see the narrow, bony hands holding the flute and to hear that shrill, exciting, slightly eerie sound which bubbled out of it.

"It's funny that Eddie never comes to see us."

"Not funny at all. People are like that, most people. All those months with us and now we might have never existed. People, young people, have so little gratitude. Of course I'm expected to forward his letters, that goes without saying."

"Perhaps we could go to see him in Clapham one day? On a Sunday or a Saturday afternoon."

"I doubt if he'd thank us for that. Not even your aunt has ever visited him in that squalid squat of his. A squat! As though he didn't have a grant and your aunt didn't keep sending money to him. A scandal, I call it."

ONE AUTUMN DAY, instead of returning straight home from school, Charmian wandered with a school-friend, an Indian girl immensely tall for her age, into Holland Park. The friend was hoping to meet a boy from the Comprehensive and when she at last saw him in the distance, with a group of other boys, she raced off from Charmian with barely a word of excuse or apology. Charmian wandered on by herself, by narrow, erratic, mud-choked paths, deeper and deeper into the heart of the park. Suddenly she came on a shabby, gaunt, middle-aged man, with an old-fashioned hearing-aid dangling a wire to his shoulder, who was feeding the birds from a brown-paper bag. She halted and watched him. First a small bird—a blue tit, though she did not know that—swooped down on to his outstretched palm; then, all at once, he was covered with pigeons, with one even perched on his balding head, an eye glittering sideways at her, a sharp chip of mica. She walked over to the man and in a soft, timid voice asked him: "May I try to feed them?" But, not hearing her, the man made no response other than a vague, distant smile.

The next day, when school was over, Charmian set out with a bag of her own full of bread-crumbs. Once again she passed the deaf man, covered with his pigeons, and then pressed on even deeper into the woods. She took a handful of crumbs out of the bag, held out her palm as she had seen him doing, and then waited with a combination of excitement and dread. A robin perched on a branch not far from her, its head on one side. It hopped to another, nearer branch and then to another. Finally, with a noisy flutter of wings, it descended. For a moment she felt it, as light as a ping-pong ball, near the fleshy base of her thumb. Then it was gone, a crumb in its beak. An extraordinary joy flooded into her. Other birds came both on that day and on all the days which followed, but she never again experienced precisely the thrill of that moment.

Soon, she had her own place in the park, just as, she had noticed, the deaf man and a number of other people each had their own places too. If someone—a small child with a girl who was either his mother or his minder, an elderly, cross-faced woman, a giggling couple, arms around each other's waists—trespassed on her place, she felt a furious resentment.

She had not merely her own place but also her own birds, like the sparrow, instantly recognisable, one of the tail-feathers of which was as white as a swan's.

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It was as she was feeding "her" birds one chill November afternoon that a tall woman, looking like some 19th-century grenadier in her sweeping loden cape and her shako of a hat, stalked past, with two golden retrievers on leads. She halted, short-sightedly screwing up her eyes under sandy eyebrows. "Do you catch birds?", she asked in a hoarse, actressy voice. The approach of her dogs, panting and slavering as they tugged at their leads, had frightened away all but one bold pigeon.

Charmian shook her head. The woman's tone sounded to her as accusatory as her mother's when, returning tired and fretful from the shop, she asked: "Have you been at those biscuits yet again?" Then she added: "I only feed them." She held up the brown-paper bag.

"Well, there's a bird by the pond over there and the ducks seem to have made up their minds to kill it."

The woman marched on, clearly believing that she had done her duty.

Charmian deliberated, a hand outstretched with some crumbs on it. Then she walked towards the pond, milkily calm beneath its overhanging branches. The ducks were quacking tumultuously, as they did when a middle-aged, gypsy-like woman, in a dirndl skirt and with a red, woollen scarf wound round her narrow head like a turban, used to approach to feed them. But the woman was not there. Charmian peered. The ducks were clustered round the farther rim of the pond, where the path did not reach, now trampling on and now pecking at what seemed to be no more than an agitated ball of mud. Charmian eventually managed to scramble over the wire fence separating the pond from the path; but, in doing so, she gave her shin a jagged scratch from which the blood soon began to ooze. Her feet sank deep, until she could feel the chilly mire oozing over a shoe on to her instep. She made her way round, arms extended and body tilting from side to side, as though, inexpertly and fearfully, she were negotiating a tight-rope.

"Go away! Shoo! Go on!" The ducks retreated a short distance, still quacking, their necks extended, and shaking their tails. She stooped, she scooped up the ball of mud. At first she did not know what to do with it, as she stared down at it. Then she shoved it into the brown paper bag and returned back along the marshy rim of the pond. Having once again scrambled over the fence to regain the path, she set off briskly for home. In her hand, the bird had lain so still that she had wondered if it might not be dead; but as she hurried along under the giant chestnut trees of Duchess of Bedford Walk, she felt a tremor and heard a rustle in the bag. She stopped, opened a corner and gingerly peeped in. The bird, clearly famished, was pecking at the crumbs which still remained.

SINCE HER MOTHER was so often away at the shop, Charmian had her own key. As she turned it in the front door, Lauris called out: "Charmian!"

"Yes, mummy."

"Eddie's here. He called by. Happened to be passing on the way to a concert in Leighton House." Lauris did not sound pleased.

"Eddie!" Charmian hurried down the basement stairs, taking them in twos and threes, and raced into the kitchen, the bag in her hand. Her mother and Eddie sat facing each other over cups of tea.

Except that his hair was much longer than she remembered it, falling almost to his shoulders, and that he had a gold stud in one ear, Eddie looked unchanged.

"Oh, Eddie!", Charmian cried out.

"Hello." Eddie did not get up. He raised his cup in both his hands and gulped from it.

"I've rescued a bird! It's here—in this bag. The ducks were trying to kill it in Holland Park. By the pond."

"Oh, Charmian!", Lauris exclaimed in reproof. Then she and Eddie both peered into the bag, as Charmian held it out for their inspection. Eventually Eddie inserted a hand—"Take care! Don't hurt it!", Charmian cried out—and withdrew the throbbing, bedraggled creature. He rubbed off some mud with the thumb of the hand on which it was now resting. "A budgie", he said. "Fancy that. It must have escaped from somewhere."

Lauris tugged off a length of paper towelling and began to dab and scrape. "Poor little thing!" She was now delighted, not annoyed, as at first.

"Can we keep it?", Charmian asked.

"It must belong to someone", Lauris answered. "The question is—who?"

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"Probably at this very moment some little girl is crying out her eyes for it", Eddie said.

"Or an old-age pensioner is frantic."

Charmian, who did not care about some little girl or an old-age pensioner, persisted, "Can't we keep it, mummy?"

Eventually, Lauris rang up the police and reported the find. But the man to whom she spoke was offhand, almost rude: no, no one had reported the loss of a budgie, but he would make a note of Lauris's name, address and telephone number.

Charmian took heart. "Where shall we keep it?", she asked.

Lauris surveyed the bird, which had now fluttered off Eddie's palm and had perched itself on top of the eye-level grill. "It's awfully pretty, now that one can see it through the mud. Sweet. We'll need a cage."

"Let's go to the pet-shop", Charmian said. "You know, the one in Abingdon Road. Where Indira bought her jerbil. Oh, do come with me, Eddie!"

Eddie looked at his watch. "O.K."

"What would a cage cost?", Lauris asked.

"Ten pounds?", Eddie suggested.

"At least that." Lauris picked up her bag from the kitchen-dresser. "Here's fifteen."

In the event, the cheapest cage cost sixteen pounds fifty and, since Charmian had only thirty pence on her, Eddie paid the difference. Then there were seed, grit and a piece of cuttle-fish bone also to be purchased. Eddie paid for those too, resolving that he would get the money back from Lauris as soon as they returned. The efficient girl assistant gave them a free leaflet with instructions—"Your Budgerigar and You." Eddie commented jocularly that the title seemed to have got its priorities wrong.

"I wonder if it's a boy or a girl", Lauris said, when she, Charmian and Eddie had pursued the increasingly terrified bird around the kitchen and, with an unexpectedly athletic leap, Eddie had at last managed to grab it, trapped against a pane of the window on to the garden, and to manoeuvre it into the cage.

Eddie shrugged, his narrow shoulders rising and falling as his breath came fast. "There's some way of telling from the beak. The experts can do it. Can't they?" He was not sure.

"What shall we call him?" Charmian was convinced that the bird was a male, and not even one of Lauris's friends, a woman who had kept budgerigars and who expressed doubts, could subsequently persuade her to the contrary. She stooped, her hair screening her face, and called: "Beakie! Beakie! Beakie!" Beakie became his name from then on. She was so interested in the bird that she was hardly aware of Eddie's departure for his concert. He had to dash, he said, or Susie would give him a rocket.

In the weeks which followed, Charmian used her pocket-money to buy Beakie a variety of playthings. These included a bell encrusted with seed, a pink plastic swing and a mauve-and-pink plastic staircase. Beakie would sometime jerk perfunctorily back and forth on the swing and he would sometimes distractedly race up and down the stairs from nowhere to nowhere, just as Lauris would distractedly race up and down the stairs of the house when she kept forgetting things in her hurry to arrive at the shop by opening-time, but what really engrossed him was to gaze longingly through his bars—his cage was on a low table below the window of Charmian's bedroom—at the pigeons strung out along the garden fence. "If they could get at you, they'd peck you to death", Charmian told him, but still he gazed out.

Charmian would sit by the cage or would stoop over it, calling out "Beakie, Beakie, Beakie!" or "Good morning, Beakie!" or "Good evening, Beakie!" in her clear, high-pitched voice. But, disappointingly, the bird showed no inclination to talk, though he would often sing, looking out on to the pigeons beyond his bars. Lauris's friend, who had kept budgerigars, said that she thought that he was probably too old to learn.

Lauris would come into Charmian's bedroom and they would let Beakie out, watching him as he fluttered from cornice to cornice or perched himself on the head of the teddy-bear propped against the mantelpiece and then placed his beak against the reflection of his beak in the mirror which hung above it. At first, Lauris seemed as fond of the bird as Charmian.

But then it began to annoy her that, as soon as she had come back from school, Charmian would at once race upstairs to see how the bird

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was doing. "Aren't you even going to greet your mother?", Lauris would ask. Beakie would now perch on Charmian's forefinger, her shoulder or her head; but he would rarely stay with Lauris. "He seems to feel that he belongs only to you", Lauris said. "He obviously doesn't realise who it is who pays for his food."

Soon after that, Lauris was complaining about the mess that the bird made. "But it's quite dry, mummy", Charmian would say, scraping away with dustpan and brush; but to that Lauris would retort that it was insanitary to have that sort of muck falling everywhere, particularly in a room in which one slept.

One day, when she was in the room, Lauris suddenly cried out "Oh, my God!" and pointed to the wall paper above the window.

"What is it, mummy?"

"That wretched bird"—he was no longer Beakie to her—"has been pecking at that lovely William Morris paper. Oh, really, it's too bad! You must keep his cage shut in future."

Charmian wailed: "But he must get out sometime! He can't spend all his time in a cage as small as that." She went over to the cage and stared at Beakie; he stared back at her, his eyes unwinking. "That leaflet—the one the girl gave us—says that, if budgerigars don't get exercise, then their life-expectancy is shortened."

Lauris told old Mrs Greene on her next visit: "That beastly little budgerigar is making absolute havoc of this house."

"He keeps Charmian happy."

"She wastes far too much time on him. She ought to be getting on with her homework."

"I suppose we could give him a home", Mrs Greene said doubtfully. "But it would break Charmian's heart not to have him around."

"Nonsense! She gets these crazes. You know what children are like."

ONE DAY CHARMIAN came home and found her bedroom window open and the cage empty. Her mother was still out at the shop but a used plate and knife, a half-drunk cup of coffee beside it, showed that she must have been home for a snack at midday. The child searched all over the house for the missing bird and then went out into the garden and even into the street, calling in a high, forlorn voice: "Beakie! Beakie! Beakie!" People stared at her but, usually so self-conscious, she was impervious to them.

Mr Donoghue, working in his front-garden, looked up to ask: "What's the trouble?" When she told him about Beakie's disappearance, he said that he would keep an eye open for him. He was sure that he could not have gone far.

By the time that her mother returned, Charmian was distraught. "Who left my window open?", she demanded.

"I expect you did", Lauris retorted, her mouth grim.

"I'd never have left the window and the door of the cage open both at the same time."

"Your room has to be aired. Perhaps Edna left it open." Edna was the char who had succeeded Mrs Rooney.

"But Edna doesn't come on Fridays."

"Well, I really don't know. I have enough to worry me without that wretched bird. Now don't make such a fuss. I daresay he'll fly back."

"A cat may have caught him."

"I doubt it. Unless the cat has wings."

That evening Charmian laboriously wrote out a number of notices: "MISSING—LOST. Blue-green budgie, answers to name of BEAKIE. Reward of £2 for safe return." She added her name, address and telephone number. She went out and stuck the notices on trees, lamp-posts and pillar-boxes in the surrounding neighbourhood. Then she rang the bells of the houses in the street and in those on either side of it. Everyone was sympathetic but no one had seen Beakie.

"You haven't done your homework", Lauris said.

"I can't, can't, can't!"

"Oh, don't carry on so!" She was being even worse than when Lauris had given the push to her drunken father.

Beakie did not return. The next day, Charmian would eat nothing. "You're being very silly", Lauris told her. "Such a fuss about a miserable little bird."

Charmian did not answer. Tears formed along her lower eyelids, which were inflamed from lack of sleep.

Lauris said: "He's probably quite happy. In another home."

Charmian put the back of her hand to her

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nose and gave a loud sniff. Then she began to sob: "It's so lonely without him!"

"Well, really! That's a nice thing to say. All that fuss about Eddie, now all this fuss about a bird. Haven't you got me?"

The days limped by. When not at school, Charmian wandered Campden Hill, peering over fences and railings and up into trees, in the hope that, by some miracle, Beakie would suddenly be visible to her. Then she resigned herself. But she did not forget him.

A few days before Christmas, Eddie arrived with two clumsily wrapped presents from his mother and one, for Charmian, from himself, in return for the two handkerchiefs which she had already posted to him at the squat. His present was a jigsaw puzzle, so simple, a mere two dozen pieces or so, that it was clearly intended for a much younger child; but Charmian was touched, laying it out on the kitchen table and putting some of the pieces together there and then. Lauris, who thought that he might have brought her something too, after all those months of hospitality, asked him what he was doing for Christmas and was obscurely satisfied when he answered that he would be spending it with Susie and her people in Norfolk.

Charmian, who had not fed the birds in the park since her rescue of Beakie, suddenly abandoned the jigsaw puzzle, got up and took a crust of bread from the breadbin.

"What's that for?", Lauris asked sharply.

"I thought I'd go into the park and feed the birds. They can't find much to eat at this time of year, with this frost."

"Well, don't bring back another Beakie", Lauris said, half in joke and half in earnest.

"Come with me", Charmian said to Eddie, more a command than a request.

"Eddie's hardly finished his tea."

But Eddie got to his feet. When Charmian had said that "Come with me", she had sounded disconcertingly like her mother.

The cousins walked along Duchess of Bedford Walk in silence. Then "Depressing time of year", Eddie muttered at last. He kicked out at a dead branch which lay in his path. "How I loathe Christmas!"

"But you'll be with Susie."

"Their house is like a refrigerator. Hell, absolute hell."

He did not sound happy about the visit. Charmian was glad.

THE PARK was all but deserted, with mist clinging like cobwebs to the branches and the air damp and chill. "Is the flute going all right", Charmian asked.

"Not bad. I won a prize at college. Did I tell you?"

"No. . . . It's so long, ages and ages, since you came to see us."

"Well, your mother doesn't make one feel precisely welcome."

Charmian knew she ought to protest but she could not do so. "I miss it", she said.

"Miss what?"

"Your playing the flute."

"Nonsense!" He laughed derisively. "You've got no ear for music. You know that."

"The house seems lonely without it."

"It got on your mother's nerves. She's got no more ear than you have."

"This is where I used to stand to feed the birds. Always, the same place, *my* place. But I haven't been here for, oh, ages. I expect they've forgotten me."

The cousins stood in silence, side by side, under the vague, dripping branches and then Charmian slowly inserted a hand into the brown-paper bag and drew out some crumbs. Eddie hunched himself inside his anorak, drawing in his pointed chin. Charmian held out a palm. "Come, come, come!", she called, quietly and yet with such intensity that Eddie, staring down at the frost-hard ruts of the path, gave a little shudder, though he did not know why. Out of the darkening sky first a robin, then a tit and then five plump, awkward pigeons descended. "They've remembered me!", Charmian cried out in mingled joy and wonder. "Look, look! They've remembered me!" There was now a pigeon on her shoulder and another in the crook of her right arm.

Eddie hugged himself inside the anorak. A bead glittered, as though it were a diamond, on the tip of his reddened nose. His back was aching.

Charmian looked up into the trees, her palm still upraised. Then all at once she cried out piercingly: "Oh, look, Eddie! Look! There he is! There's Beakie!"

Eddie craned his neck, he screwed up his eyes. He could see nothing.

"Up there! High, high!" She pointed. Then she called: "Beakie, Beakie, Beakie!" She

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raised her palm higher, her oblation on it.

She lowered her palm. Softly she said: "He's gone. He's flown off. Perhaps he didn't see me. Perhaps he didn't hear me."

Suddenly Eddie felt a strange tremor, not of the body but of the spirit, such as, in the past, he had only experienced when listening to music. On an impulse, he drew his hands out of the pockets of his anorak and then placed his right arm around her shoulder. He had never touched her before, he hated touching people or himself being touched, even with Susie he had to steel himself for contact. He drew the gauche, bird-like body against him. "Well, there, you see! Beakie's quite capable of surviving on his own. You don't have to worry about him. He's got all this way through the winter. You don't have to worry about him. He's free and he's happy."

"Yes, he's free and he's happy. Yes." She gazed up into the misty branches, her eyes wide and a hand to her lips. "Yes. Yes. Yes!"

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Company

Cold air swings through the trees
On ropes of mist today
And ripe anatomies
Close up and fold away,

A wry and sketchy leaf
Turns on its skeleton,
The chill preserves my breath,
Late sun pickles a stone.

Rain idles on the air
And skips the wood to fuss
The edgy pavements where
Its sullen impetus

Is carried on the back
Of gravity into
The artificial lake,
Its unprotesting blue.

The traces of a fire
Have sealed into a sweet
Black pabulum to tar
The ground beneath my feet.

Now everywhere I turn
Was tenanted before;
The ashes itch to burn,
Flames roll across the floor.

John Levett

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Two Post-Election Commentaries

Of Lions & Ostriches

The Meaning of Mrs Thatcher's Victory

In a Long Perspective—By VERNON BOGDANOR

"GENERAL ELECTIONS", declared Sir Lewis Namier, "are the locks on the stream of British democracy, controlling the flow of the river and its traffic. . . ."[1] The metaphor, as always with Namier, is exact and precise. Elections are rarely watersheds; they seldom alter the course of a nation's political life; more often they serve to confirm a change of direction which has already occurred. Elections may endorse but they do not create political realignments.

So it was in 1983. After a lacklustre and uninspiring campaign, the Conservatives duly won their expected victory—a landslide in terms of seats if not of votes. The commanding lead which the Conservatives had enjoyed in the opinion polls since the Falklands war was never seriously challenged, and the issue could hardly have been in doubt. The 1983 general election was a classic example of what has been called a "non-political election",[2] one in which the government positioned itself above mere party politics, concentrating its fire upon the credibility of the Opposition parties, who were quite bereft of concrete targets to attack.

Yet general elections, even when they serve to confirm rather than alter the course of a country's history, may be of profound significance in other ways. For the act of voting—an act which lies at the very heart of the democratic process—enables the elector to give expression to those hopes and fears which even the most sensitive of opinion polls will fail to register. A general election holds up a mirror to society, a mirror which reflects the way a nation perceives itself and reveals those inarticulate forces and sentiments hidden from view by the organs of mass opinion.

It is from this perspective that the general election of 1983 might appear to the future historian as perhaps the most important since 1945. For it served to show that the post-War political settlement, nurtured by Churchill's coalition and brought to fruition by Labour, was now exhausted, and that a new dispensation would have to be constructed upon its ruins. The contours of that new dispensation are not yet entirely clear. It will not necessarily follow the pattern of Mrs Thatcher's Conservatism, but is more likely to contain elements of quite different creeds. It will probably be post-Conservative rather than Conservative.[3]

IN THE POLITICS of post-War Britain, the key motif is consensus. This was the product not so much

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[1] *Avenues of History* (1952), p. 183.

[2] Peter Kellner, "Mrs Thatcher corners the non-political vote", *New Statesman*, 27 May 1983.

[3] Compare Kevin P. Phillips, *Post-Conservative America: People, Politics and Ideology in a Time of Crisis* (New York, 1982), a brilliant account of the contradictions in Ronald Reagan's electoral constituency.

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of 1945 as of 1940, when Labour was brought into government by Churchill and became one of the pillars of the State; and of 1942 when the Beveridge Report laid down aspirations quite incompatible with a return to the Baldwin/Chamberlain régime. The post-War settlement was the product not so much of a party triumph at a general election; it flowed, rather, from one of those mysterious changes in popular consciousness which irresistibly transform the political landscape, and which politicians are quite incapable of resisting.

Churchill, with characteristic prescience, was aware of what was happening and welcomed instead of resisting change. In the 1930s he had appreciated that British rearmament depended upon the cooperation of the trade unions; and, unlike Chamberlain, he believed that this cooperation would be forthcoming, the unions being as committed to national defence as the Conservatives. In May 1940, Churchill showed himself determined to give Labour its proper share in government—and indeed it was the Labour leaders Attlee and Greenwood who stood foursquare with him against proposals for a compromise peace while Chamberlain and Halifax wavered. Those who had helped to save the country could not, in Churchill's conception of things, be denied the right to rule it. Nineteen forty-five was merely a confirmation of that right.[4]

Labour's triumph in 1945 was, of course, far from being a victory for socialism. Instead it ushered in a period in which the old ideologies—socialism and economic liberalism alike—seemed to have been transcended. Politicians abjured the old doctrinal arguments; they were too busy establishing a form of society which had hardly been prefigured in the writings of the political theorists—the "mixed economy" which, with the Welfare State, ensured for almost everyone in Britain a period of more rapid and substantial economic and social progress than they had ever known.

This period lasted for nearly thirty years, during which consensus remained supreme. In so far as it was challenged, the challenge seemed to come from the Left. It was those Socialists still believing in Socialism—Bevanites in the 1950s, Bennites in the 1970s—who appeared to offer the most serious threat to the post-War equilibrium. The economic liberals of the Right, on the other hand, seemed merely fustian and absurd—rather like men in frock coats who had failed to notice that sartorial styles were changing. There was little need to argue with them; they condemned themselves by advocating, so it seemed, the very policies which had brought Britain near to ruin in the 1930s.

Moreover, there were reasons of a severely practical kind to explain why no challenge from the Right could be expected to succeed. For the maintenance of economic stability—full employment together with steady prices—depended crucially upon the restraint of organised labour; and this in turn required governments to enter into bargaining relationships with the trade unions. Whether governments attempted to moderate wage claims through "incomes policies"—either statutory or voluntary—or through other methods, they needed to secure the consent both of union leaders and of the rank-and-file membership if economic management was to be successful. Mobilising the consent of organised labour required, so it was thought, maintenance of what Harold Wilson rather artfully called "the social wage"—expenditure on the social services. Thus a firm commitment to the Welfare State, a high level of public expenditure, and a conciliatory attitude towards the trade unions seemed essential preconditions for economic success. Yet it was precisely these commitments which the policies of the economic liberals would destroy.

THERE WERE therefore, severe constraints on the extent to which post-War Conservative administrations could apply the nostrums of the free marketeers. Indeed, Conservative governments of the 1950s governed in much the same way as Labour administrations would have done. "Butskellism"—that composite, invented by *The Economist*, of Hugh Gaitskell and R.A. Butler who succeeded each other as Chancellor in the early 1950s—was a journalistic exaggeration, but it had substance nevertheless.

> "There are some who say that the answer lies in savage deflationary policies, resulting in high levels of unemployment. They say that we should depress demand to a point at which employers cannot afford to pay and workers are in no position to ask for higher wages. If this be the only way to contain the wage-price spiral, it is indeed a sorry reflection upon our modern society. To slash production, to drive down investment, to push up unemployment to a level at which, despite high world demand, we have

[4] See Martin Gilbert, *Winston Churchill: Vol. VI: Finest Hour, 1939–41* (Heinemann, 1983), *passim*. The best account of the construction of the post-War consensus remains Paul Addison, *The Road to 1945* (Jonathan Cape, 1975).

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manufactured our own recession, is to say the least a high price to pay for stability."

Peter Thorneycroft, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, introducing his 1957 Budget

The consensus depended crucially upon economic growth. For the Conservatives, only economic success could justify a level of social spending which might otherwise have been profoundly uncongenial; and acquiescence in an extension of trade-union power which radically altered the balance of social forces in the state. For Labour, on the other hand, growth seemed to make the class war redundant. What was the point of fighting, if everyone could win by peaceful means? It was Anthony Crosland who, in *The Future of Socialism* (1956) articulated the vision of a society in which steady economic progress made possible redistribution without tears, and the evolution of a sanitised, trouble-free social democracy *à la Suède*. Growth Crosland tended to take for granted. It made interventionist government tolerable to the Conservatives and Socialism irrelevant to Labour. It all looked—and was—too good to be true:

". . . the national shift to the Left, with all its implications for the balance of power, may be accepted as permanent. . . .

The mood of the electorate provides, in any event, a sufficient guarantee against a sweeping counter-revolution. The voters, now convinced that full employment, generous welfare services and social stability can quite well be preserved, will certainly not relinquish them. Any Government which tampered seriously with the basic structure of the full-employment Welfare State would meet with a sharp reverse at the polls; and this knowledge acts as rather a strong inducement to politicians not to tamper. . . .

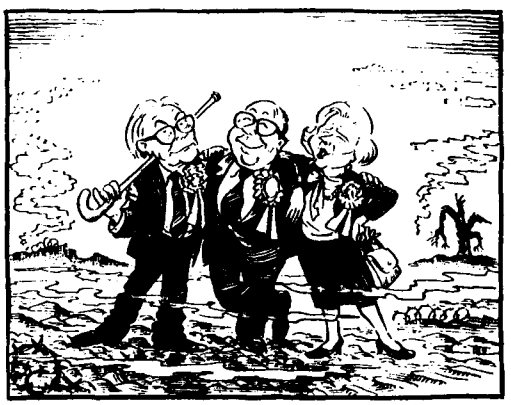
The Conservatives, then, besides acting as a barrier to further advance, will continue to make dents in the new social and economic structure; in particular they will favour the better-off classes as much as they dare. But they will certainly not destroy the essential fabric."

Anthony Crosland, *The Future of Socialism*

THE WORLD RECESSION, of course, put paid to prospects of rapid economic growth for the foreseeable future. Since the oil crisis of 1973 and the collapse of Edward Heath's hopes for economic expansion, stagnation rather than growth has been the central feature of British economic life. It was only to be expected, therefore, that the consensus would come under considerable strain. What could not have been so easily predicted was that it could be the Right, and not the Left, which would become the beneficiary of the collapse of the post-War settlement, socialism rather than Conservatism which would be defeated by the slump.

DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM has sustained two major defeats this century. In 1914, the working classes and most of their leaders abandoned the slogans of internationalism and rallied with patriotic fervour to the national flag. "I do not see parties any more—I see only Germans", the Kaiser was able to announce in 1914. In the 1930s, the slump—the long predicted collapse of capitalism led to the triumph not of socialism but of economic nationalism which, in those countries lacking strong democratic institutions, assumed the virulent form of fascism. It was the European Right which, except in Scandinavia, found itself the beneficiary of depression, not the Socialist Left still less the Communist Parties of Western Europe which, by the 1930s had become little more than agents of Stalin's foreign policy.

The question to be asked is whether the recession of the 1970s and 1980s will not prove to be a third historic defeat for the Socialist ideology in the advanced countries of the West. Britain is, in a sense, a test case. For, if a Socialist opposition cannot win an election against a government which has doubled unemployment to three million and seen a 20% fall in production—larger than in the 1929 slump—one wonders what relevance democratic socialism still has to advanced industrial societies. Nor was it merely the "extremism" of the Left which deterred voters. For survey



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evidence seems to suggest that the nostrums of the Labour Right—high public expenditure, egalitarian social policies, a greater role for the trade unions in economic life—are disliked by the electorate with almost equal intensity. In Britain, so it seems, the interruption to capitalist growth has put Socialists, not Conservatives, on the defensive.

Nor is it only in Mrs Thatcher's Britain that the Left appears discredited and irrelevant. The same is true of Ronald Reagan's America and Helmut Kohl's Germany, while in those countries (France, Greece) where Democratic Socialists have succeeded in winning power, they have been forced to abandon their economic and social ideals and to operate within a framework laid down by their political opponents. "We were dreaming a bit, it is true, in 1981", François Mitterrand has confessed, "I was carried away by 'victory', we were intoxicated."[5]

IN CONTRAST TO Marx's predictions, democracy has exerted a homogenising rather than a divisive effect upon the population of Western Europe and America. Nationalism remains by far the strongest force in most Western democracies, and the result of mass unemployment and industrial collapse has been to strengthen national feeling and weaken class solidarity. As George Orwell appreciated, national feeling is itself a unifying force in a democracy, and it is experienced most strongly by the working class who remained four-square behind Mrs Thatcher during the Falklands crisis while the City trembled for the security of its Latin American investments. Capital was internationalist and labour patriotic—a truth which Michael Foot and Neil Kinnock wholly failed to understand.

While the recession has heightened *national* solidarity, it has weakened the *social* solidarity upon which parties of the Left so much depend. The response to recession is a withdrawal from wider social ties, a privatisation of life, a drawing inwards, an attachment to Burke's "little platoon—the first principle (the germ as it were) of public affections." It is the familial values of self-discipline, responsibility and care for one's own—celebrated by Mrs Thatcher's appeal to Victorian values and Ronald Reagan's fond evocation of the Coolidge era—not the public virtues of the "participating citizen", which come to the fore.

Moreover, the recession, as James Alt has noticed, diminishes altruism and so undermines popular support for the Welfare State.[6] As voters narrow their concerns, so also they lower their expectations. In the 1970s, fashionable commentators argued that the "revolution of rising expectations" in the modern consumerist Welfare State would make democracy unworkable. In fact, the electorate has rapidly adjusted its expectations downwards, perhaps excessively so, as economic conditions have deteriorated. In 1983 the voters did not believe politicians, whether Labour or Alliance, who told them that unemployment could be lowered by alternative economic policies; and, for this reason, the Opposition parties lacked credibility from the outset.

The Conservative manifesto, by contrast, captured the new mood of the electorate by rigorously abstaining from promises. "We will not promise more than we can perform. We therefore promise nothing", was Keynes' summary of the attitudes of Conservative governments of the 1920s; it could apply equally well to the Conservative 1983 manifesto which carefully concealed the radical intentions of Mrs Thatcher and her allies. The electoral tactics of the Conservatives showed, however, a shrewd appreciation of the basis of their electoral support, which was fundamentally negative—fear of Labour—rather than positive—support for a Conservative counter-revolution. The result of the election, therefore, can in no way be construed as a mandate for "Thatcherism."

ALL THE SAME, it would be foolish to deny that Mrs Thatcher's brand of Conservatism is supported even by many of those who are unlikely to prove its economic beneficiaries, such as the unemployed and ethnic minorities.[7] Its most enthusiastic converts are probably to be found not among the "rich" of Left-wing demonology, but amongst those with little or no capital of their own. That Mrs Thatcher has succeeded, however temporarily, in creating a new electoral coalition from elements which in the past formed part of Labour's natural constituency can hardly be in

[5] "Mitterrand 'confesses' errors", *The Times*, 11 July, p. 4.

[6] James Alt, *The Politics of Economic Decline: Economic Management and Political Behaviour in Britain Since 1964* (Cambridge University Press, 1979).

[7] Survey evidence suggests that 24% of the unemployed and 25% of the ethnic minorities voted Conservative (*Labour Weekly*, 17 June 1983).

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doubt. A large part of her success must be attributed to the fact that the brand of Conservatism which she represents is quite distinct from traditional Conservatism in that it is both *radical* and *populist*.

Previous Conservative administrations—those of Stanley Baldwin, Harold Macmillan, even Edward Heath—were essentially accommodationist and defensive. They sought to conserve a society whose values they saw as supportive of Conservatism. Mrs Thatcher's Conservatives, by contrast, see themselves in a society whose arrangements are saturated with the statism of the post-War consensus, and whose morality has been undermined by the permissive "adversary culture" of the 1960s. Conservatives thus find themselves hostile to the *status quo* rather than upholders of it. Thatcherism finds its enemies, as Tory commentators have noticed, at the heart of the British Establishment—her antipathy to the knights of the shires as represented by Francis Pym has led her to undertake "what Labour has been ineffectively talking about for years: the elimination of Britain's old ruling class from the corridors of power . . . Thatcherism is the militant tendency of the Tory Party and henceforth it will rule unchallenged."[8]

The transformation which Mrs Thatcher seeks is as much cultural and moral as it is economic. Indeed, for her, economics seems to have become a branch of morality, the sphere from which Keynes tried so heroically to expel it 50 years ago. For Mrs Thatcher, however, we must be virtuous before we can become rich. Such an approach to economic affairs, however naive it might seem to the professional economist, probably mirrors popular attitudes rather better than the sophisticated constructions of the social scientists. "Thatcherism", like its cousin "Reaganism", is as much a response to cultural frustrations as it is to specifically economic deprivation. It ministers to a widespread sense of alienation both from consensus politics and from the Establishment which managed the consensus.

THIS ALIENATION is by no means a sudden or new arrival on the British political scene. Its earliest manifestations could be seen in the widespread enthusiasm for Enoch Powell in the late 1960s, an early and slightly unexpected indication that popular discontent would undermine the consensus not from the Left but from the Right, and something overlooked by those commentators who foolishly believed that Tariq Ali and the student protest represented the wave of the future.

Popular frustration found an alternative outlet in Jeremy Thorpe's Liberal Party in 1974 (and perhaps to some extent in the SDP/Liberal Alliance in 1983); but it had to wait for Mrs Thatcher to be given full expression. "Thatcherism", of course, is not a clearly defined ideological movement, nor is it a consistent economic doctrine, but rather the manifestation of a social mood, something which owes as much to Mrs Whitehouse and to the folk image of the thrifty shopkeeper as it does to the economic foundations laid down by Milton Friedman and Friedrich von Hayek. What should be clear is that the mood which Thatcherism seeks to exploit is very far from being *conservative* in any traditional sense; its roots, which lie in the fear of inflation and a sense of frustrated patriotism, could be exploited only by a political leader willing to move beyond Conservatism as it has been understood in Britain since 1945.

THE GREATEST TRIUMPH which Mrs Thatcher's brand of Conservatism has so far secured has been to win the ideological argument. Since 1979 she has shown that government can be conducted, quite successfully, outside the constraints of the post-War consensus. Her strength has always been that she has understood the flimsiness of that consensus and the shallowness of its roots in popular consciousness. Mrs Thatcher is a politician who deals with electoral realities rather than Establishment myths. She has appreciated that "the permissive society" has not destroyed a fundamental attachment to traditional moral values; that, in a recession, the trade unions are toothless and impotent—more pathetic than sinister. She has understood that the barriers to an independent British foreign policy, whether in the Falklands or in Europe, were less than the Foreign Office would have had her believe. And, above all, she has appreciated that the British electorate is less internationalist, less dedicated to compromise, less attached to cooperation between government and unions, than its political leaders. "Thatcherism", therefore, finds itself far more in tune with popular preconceptions and prejudices than the rather tolerant, easy-going, internationalist conservatism which it has largely succeeded in replacing.

[8] Peregrine Worsthorne, "Enter the New Men", *Sunday Telegraph*, 29 May 1983.

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To have altered the rhetoric of politics so radically is an extraordinary political achievement. Nevertheless, "Thatcherism" has so far done little of substance actually to reverse the long process of economic decline in Britain. Indeed, the economy is arguably in a worse state now than it was when the Conservatives assumed office in 1979. If the actions of the Conservative administration have been less radical than its rhetoric, its record of accomplishment is quite minimal. No doubt it is far too early to offer even a provisional verdict on Mrs Thatcher's experiment with the British economy, but the omens are not very hopeful. The cracker-barrel mottoes and homely precepts which constitute the essence of Mrs Thatcher's philosophy seem hardly the stuff of which permanent revival can be made. Having won most of the ideological battles, she could still lose the economic war. If she does, "Thatcherism" will prove to be merely a transitory spasm rather than the foundation of a permanent realignment in British politics, and the failure of Thatcherism could easily be followed by the construction of a new consensus whose outlines are now only dimly discernible.

THE CENTRAL PARADOX of 20th-century British politics is the coexistence of economic weakness with political stability.[9] Decline has led neither to "crisis" of the kind predicted by Marxists, nor to "renewal" of the variety hoped for by Joseph Chamberlain—the first of a long line of apostles of economic modernisation to be rejected by the British electorate.[10] The British people have consistently refused the offers of salvation which have been made to them, resisted the mechanisation of life as preached by the prophets of "National Efficiency", and remained what they have always been—inhabitants of a peaceable if rather run-down civic kingdom: in economic affairs, at least, ostriches rather than lions.[11]

It would be unrealistic to expect that a single government, even one led by so determined a politician as Mrs Thatcher, can do much to transform such deep-rooted national habits.

[9] Keith Middlemas, *Politics in Industrial Society: The Experience of the British System Since 1911* (André Deutsch, 1970).

[10] The Labour Shadow Cabinet published a volume of essays before the general election, entitled *Renewal: Labour's Britain in the 1980s* (Penguin, 1983). It was almost completely ignored.

[11] Brian Harrison, *Peaceable Kingdom: Stability and Change in Modern Britain* (Oxford University Press, 1983). Arthur Koestler, *The Lion and the Ostrich* (Eighth Annual Lecture under the "Thank-Offering to Britain Fund", Oxford University Press, 1973).

The Collapse of a Broad Church

Illusions & Delusions — By ANTHONY HARTLEY

"THE TUMULT and the shouting dies." Some of the Captains and the Kings have departed or are preparing to do so, and many a sage commentator is recommending to Mrs Thatcher an humble and a contrite heart. It is indeed, quite possible to be awed by this considerable change in Britain's political landscape, even though the public-opinion polls had done their best, in the days before the election, to accustom us to the impending transformation of the scenery.

Transformation is undoubtedly the word, though, no doubt, there will soon be those whose taste for paradox will recover sufficiently to tell us that nothing has really taken place. Still, the facts are there. Thinking back to 1966, when even a seat like Chislehurst was not safe for the Conservatives, and when the Labour Party had many seats in East Anglia, the South-West and the South-East of England, the size of the change is evident. Enough has been written about the extent of Labour's losses among all categories of voters, including skilled workers and the unemployed, for there to be no need to dwell on the point. That broad

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church has been shorn of its nave and transepts—and what abashed disharmony among the choristers! To continue the metaphor, might not the collapse of Labour be attributed to the activities of those death-watch beetles who, nurtured by the neo-Marxism of the 1960s, have riddled the woodwork of the building over the last two decades?

Two aspects of the catastrophe (a loss of 20% of the Party's 1979 vote) might suggest some general conclusions for anyone interested in British politics.

First, it was undoubtedly Labour's policies—not their presentation, not the Party's leadership (though that was symptomatic of the policies themselves)—which lost the election. The manifesto was a document drawn up by party activists for party activists. Its theses, permeated by an outmoded ideology, had little appeal to, or relevance for, the average voter. This was a singular instance of how ideology isolates, of how those devoted to beliefs current among a small circle of the faithful can be bemused by their own imaginings to the extent of ignoring reality.

Nuclear disarmament provides a good example. A demonstration of 20, 30, or 50,000 marchers "against the Bomb" can appear to be an impressive symbol of an aroused public opinion. Add to party organisation through the distorting lens of ladies of Greenham Common, and it is easy to feel that the issue would be a vote-winner in an election. Only when the moment comes, the polls show 75% of voters in favour of keeping the British deterrent; and "nuclear disarmament" probably did the Labour Party more harm than any other issue during the election campaign. The party activist, blinded by his ideological prejudices and insulated from public opinion by living in a milieu composed of people holding the very same views as himself, has taken for an expression of popular emotion the demonstrations and protests which he and his like have brought about. He has helped to organise a "movement" and then convinced himself that it was spontaneous. Only the harsh election results might disillusion him, if he were capable of disillusionment.

MY POINT does not solely concern the Labour Party, although its willingness to allow its policies to be dictated by internal party considerations is a striking example of this state of mind. A French writer once remarked that the average voter was normally more intelligent that the average party *militant*. "Open-minded" might be a better word, but there is certainly reason to think that any party which directs its policies towards its own activists rather than towards the electorate is in for a sharp lesson. Indeed, it is an alarming reflection that more democratic procedures within a political party (and hence more power for the average activist) seem to imply less attention to the wishes of the ordinary citizen in the formulation of policy, since his requirements are perceived within the party organisation through the distorting lens of political commitment and ideology.

ANOTHER SIGNIFICANT ASPECT of the Labour Party's defeat is the resulting electoral geography. As David Lipsey, writing in the *Sunday Times*, has put it: "Labour is now the party of declining Britain." The areas of economic modernity and rising population, well placed to take advantage of the re-orientation of British trade towards the European market, are now the ones where Labour Members of Parliament hardly exist (one seat in East Anglia, one each in the South-East and South-West, few in the East Midlands). Its strongholds are the areas of obsolete heavy industry in Scotland and the North of England as well as the decaying and emptying inner cities.

What we appear to be seeing is the gradual erosion of the economic and social environment in which it was natural for workers in heavy industry to vote Labour. Moreover, there is no reason to suppose that this process is at an end. The Labour heartlands of the North, North-West, and North-East of England, and the industrial areas of Scotland will also be subject to change, as there is a turnover of employment from manufacturing to service industries; and to loss of population (and, therefore, of parliamentary seats) as new enterprises are sited in pleasanter and more convenient spots than the run-down conurbations of the Clyde or Merseyside. For Labour to escape the consequences of this process its policies would have to be changed and its activists induced to recognise the existence of advanced industrial society. At present there seems little chance that either will happen.

A continued disintegration of the Labour Party should give the Liberal/Social-Democrat Alliance its chance. But to take that chance the Party would have to present itself as the only credible opposition to Mrs Thatcher—a position to be gained by seriousness of discourse in parliamentary debate and the winning of by-elections. In the South of England the Alliance is already the real opposition; but, to succeed in substituting itself for

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Labour, it would have to assert this claim in the Midlands, Wales, and the North. In four years time the Alliance's policies may have developed a sharper edge and become more familiar to the voter—especially if it resists the temptation to bore him to death on the topic of proportional representation. But what sort of policies ought they to be? Here perhaps the Liberal and Social-Democratic leaders might draw a moral from the change which has come over British politics since 1965.

MRS THATCHER IS OFTEN accused by unreflecting critics of having replaced "consensus politics" by "the politics of confrontation." What is meant by "consensus politics" ranges from the phrase "Butskellism" (never an accurate epigram) to the much more sophisticated account given by Keith Middlemas in his brilliant book *Politics in Industrial Society* (1979) of "a new form of harmony in the political system" established in the mid-1920s and continuing until the mid-60s "when the much-vaunted 'consensus' was seriously, if not fatally, disrupted. . . . Is it unreasonable to assume that, earlier than in any other industrial country, British governments began to make the avoidance of crises their first priority?" The facts he recounts certainly bear out his theory.

However, it might be asked whether it is not also reasonable to assume that this attitude over a long period of time had something to do with the loss of competitiveness of British industry, a development which, in the late 1960s and the '70s brought about an economic crisis with the consequences which we now perceive. To put it another way, was not "consensus" bought at the price of shirking necessarily hard decisions about British economic life and confining action to a mere treatment of symptoms by those Keynesian techniques which, because of their very brilliance, were an irresistible temptation to politicians concerned above all to avoid unpleasantness?

HOWEVER THIS MAY BE—and one may be grateful to Mr Middlemas for raising the question—it was not the appearance of Mrs Thatcher which produced the breakdown of this "consensus." It was the fact that, by 1965, British industry was in an observable state of crisis, and that a country dependent on world trade was already beginning to suffer from competition both in its domestic and in its international markets. At this point it was perceived, and constantly reiterated by politicians, journalists, and industrialists themselves, that remedies were needed: new products, new technology, new ways of working. Indeed, the success of Harold Wilson's evocation of the "white-hot heat of technology" owed much to this perception. In Sir Harold and, later, in Edward Heath the British voter thought he was getting a manager—in the case of Mr Heath he was not far wrong, though Sir Harold's political skills stood him in better stead.

But there was no "consensus" on how the crisis should be met, and it is hard to see how there could have been. For one thing, as has since become clear, British manufacturing industry could only survive by the massive introduction of new technology and a drastic reduction of those employed. In agreeing to this, trade-union leaders would have had to agree to a diminution of their own membership, financial resources, and political power. This they could hardly have been expected to do, nor did they. Eventually the inevitable happened. From the mid-1970s onwards, manufacturing industry shed labour, but by then an advancing world recession made it impossible to place in service industries those who were made redundant. The palliatives adopted by governments in the decade following 1965 did no service either to themselves or to those employed in industry.

THE DISADVANTAGE of "consensus politics" is that it does not work in a situation where something urgently needs doing from which powerful interest groups dissent. In these conditions attempts to maintain the "consensus" by reconciling opposing interests in a compromise solution only turn difficulties into disasters. Moreover, such unsuccessful manipulation damages the authority of government, thus making it even harder to solve the next problem. The solutions reached in the name of "consensus" are all too often pure political agreements on a form of words, having little relevance to substantive policy

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which continues to remain inchoate. Time is lost irretrievably as pseudo-solution after pseudo-solution fails to solve. Finally, when the situation has deteriorated sufficiently, the "consensus", to which so much has been sacrificed, breaks down as it becomes clear that no remedy can be found within its terms.

This seems to have been what has happened to the "consensus" over the economic and social shape of British society which is said to have existed before 1965. For the crisis of British industry—a crisis brought about by changes in advanced Western technology and the patterns of international trade—was precisely something that required an end to comfortable arrangements between trade unions and employers by which costs were passed on, first to the consumer, then, at a later stage, to the taxpayer. Now, after the election, it appears that a majority of the British people welcome the destruction of this particular "consensus", and this is hardly surprising.[1] Most people are quite prepared as tax-payers to make their contribution to the sick and the old, but to keep motor-car workers in the style to which they are accustomed, while radical shop stewards enact a sort of Marat-Sade *Death of British Industry* on the factory floor, is a different matter.

THE RESULTS of the election confirmed that the British people now requires of its government policies that address themselves to the harsh facts of the country's position in a difficult world rather than a programme designed to flatter the nostalgia of party activists. The Prime Minister appears to have created a new coalition of interests, based on an increased sense of national identity and a determination by the economically active sections of society to enjoy the fruits of their endeavours, which inflation—more perhaps than taxation—had hitherto denied them. Hers is a relatively classless Conservatism, certainly lacking some of the old patrician virtues, but more dynamic and less resigned to national failure than what has gone before. This is not necessarily to say that all Mrs Thatcher does will be successful, but it is to suggest that opposition to her will have to be conducted on new premises which are largely of her creation.

There has also been a change of political personnel. A generation has been eliminated, and the contenders are now younger men. A threnody in the manner of Chief Justice Crewe or the Baron de Charlus might be composed on the famous names who are now no longer in the forefront of political life. But if politicians can be divided into "ancients" and "moderns"—and that is sometimes a good way to divide them—then David Owen and David Steel appear decisively "moderns" along with the Prime Minister. It is for that reason that they have a chance of taking the opportunity that is now presented to them.

As for the Labour Party, will it continue to look backwards or, at best, remain a Mr Facing-both-ways? Perhaps, however, it has no choice. Further erosion or fundamental change are the alternatives that await it. The 1983 election has expressed in political terms the changes in British economic and social life which had previously been concealed by the façades of party organisation and party doctrine. It is an event that can neither be neglected nor conjured away by the spells of ideology.

[1] Mrs Thatcher, of course, did not receive a majority of the total vote. But it seems safe to assume that sufficient SDP/Liberal Alliance voters are in favour of genuine reform of British industry, an end to over-manning, the introduction of the latest technology, etc., for this statement to be accurate.

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Michael Charlton

On the Origins of the Cold War

The Eagle & the Small Birds

3. The Eclipse of Ideology

"The eagle should permit the small birds to sing, and care not wherefore they sang."

CHURCHILL *to* STALIN, *at Yalta (4 February 1945)*

THE YEASTS OF DISCONTENT with Soviet colonial rule over Eastern Europe have been restlessly at work in their effects on the "certainties" of Communist ideology. As with every system of thought and ideas, the strength of communism has depended to a large extent on its power to attract and hold the minds of an educated élite including the intelligentsia. Today it is almost palpable that on the battlefield of ideas in Eastern Europe since the death of Stalin, the "ideology" which was once a heady propellent has now lost virtually all conviction.

The crushing by the Red Army of the Hungarian uprising in 1956, the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 to prevent the installation in Prague of what was deemed to be "communism with a human face", and in the present day the smothering of *Solidarity*—the cot death of a free trade union movement in Poland—all these have shown that when it comes to ways of thinking, the Soviet Union has not been able to sustain any fundamental ideological loyalties.

I want, in this third article, to look at the formidable critique of communism which has come from within the ranks of its ruling caste in Eastern Europe, a contribution which discloses that same pattern of development which may be seen to mark the recurring cycle of social disturbances there. It is one of gathering, cumulative opposition. What began as a challenge to Soviet orthodoxy on a relatively narrow front, exemplified by the Yugoslav leader Milovan Djilas and his book *The New Class* (1957), then broadened out in the attempts and failures to revise the faith in the 1950s and '60s, and has reached a significant new plateau in the magisterial studies of communism by the Polish philosopher Leszek Kolakowski. With Kolakowski one is left to conclude that if ideology is dead it still appears indispensable, and hence Eastern Europe, 40 years after the Second World War, is chained to an ideological corpse. What, then, is left?

Leonard Schapiro, a distinguished elder among British political scientists who have specialised in Soviet studies, offers this as the distilled essence of Soviet ideology today:

SCHAPIRO: "What this ideology has come to mean is a method of control. There are two elements in Soviet ideology which are absolutely indestructible, and any amount of force will be applied to preserve them. One is the doctrine of 'proletarian internationalism', which means that the Soviet Union comes first, and that in order to preserve 'the centre of world socialism' everything in other countries has to be subordinated to the interests of the Soviet Union. This is the basis of the Soviet Union's domination over the satellites, and it remains fundamental. Now, that is really 'Ideology.' Secondly, there is the doctrine that the Party has an inalienable right to rule, because this can only derive from ideology. Nobody ever elected the Party, no Communist Party has ever come to power on the basis of popular acclaim (except, perhaps, by accident or misunderstanding); therefore the foundation of the Party's predominance has to be 'ideological.'

In that sense Ideology is very real, and so I think it is wrong to talk about 'the death of Ideology.' If you mean by that the fact that the tenets of Marxism have been discredited, the unity of Marxism shattered, the practical success of Marxist-type governments demonstrated to be non-existent—in that sense, of course, the 'death' of Ideology *does* have a meaning. In the Soviet Union (and I should think

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in most of the satellites, except perhaps Bulgaria) nobody believes any more in any of the tenets of the system. But when one talks about 'death' one has to remember those two pillars which survive. They are, of course, the pillars of 'Control', which is what communism has become and has come to mean. All the deviations from it have not, I think, been so much matters of theory. They have been struggles for liberation from what has been felt to be an alien strait-jacket."

LEONARD SCHAPIRO defines the one sense in which the Polish philosopher Leszek Kolakowski seems prepared to acknowledge that ideology is still indispensable. "Faith in communism" in Eastern Europe (according to Kolakowski) came to an end with the failure of the historic efforts to reform communism and the Communist Parties after Stalin's death in 1953.

The contrast between the vision of a society which was "socially just" (if rigidly organised) and the reality of one in which human rights have been cynically repressed was the revelation which put an end to communism's greatest allure for anyone but the truest believer. That inherent magnetism is described by Kolakowski, who belonged to the younger generation of Communists in Poland after the War.

KOLAKOWSKI: "We were perfectly aware at the time that we were a small minority in a country which was essentially hostile to communism and to the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, we were convinced that communism is not only the best but the *only* solution for the continuous progress of Mankind. There were many illusions and errors behind this judgment. There were the normal illusions of young intellectuals who want to have a universal key, an all-embracing perfect system, explaining all past history and offering a prescription for a glorious future. Marxism seemed to us attractive because it has this apparent power of supplying explanations for virtually everything and at the same time offering this intellectual instrument to the cause of oppressed and exploited peoples.

However, there were other reasons. We somehow saw communism as a continuation of the revolutionary, humanist, socialist tradition—of the spirit of the Enlightenment which Marxism, to some extent, used to be. We were very hostile to a certain kind of cultural tradition that had dominated Polish life in past decades, the clerical, somewhat obscurantist tradition—a tradition of bigotry. We believed Marxism to be an intellectual instrument to oppose this tradition, and one which would give us a large, internationalist, rationalist view of the world. These were illusions, to be sure. But they were not absolutely foolish. Polish culture was really torn between various tendencies, as all national cultures are. We believed that by identifying ourselves with communism we could continue the tradition of Enlightenment, rationalism, and internationalism as represented by the Left-orientated intelligentsia before the War, and earlier, in fact, in the 19th century.

Another reason was that we believed that after the unspeakable horrors of the War and the Nazi occupation of Poland, communism proved to be the most effective force in opposing the barbarity to which Europe had fallen prey. The democratic establishments of pre-War Europe seemed to us to be utterly discredited.

So there it is. There were various motives which led both me and many of my colleagues to communism."

THE OLDER GENERATION OF "believers" who came to power in Eastern Europe after World War II were a highly resistant strain who had proved their immunity to the moral and ideological doubts which had, in the 1920s and '30s, driven others out of the Communist fold and out of Communist Parties all over the world, as with Stalin's bloody purges.

These were sturdy souls who had maintained their loyalty to the Party throughout both vegetarian and carnivorous times. Among them was Edouard Goldstücker, a Communist who was imprisoned in the purges of the 1950s in Eastern Europe and who later played a leading part in the events which led up to what became known as "the Prague Spring" of 1968.

GOLDSTÜCKER: "If you embrace a set of ideas, or a creed, as wholeheartedly as I did, then you need a tremendous lot of hammering, of counter-arguments, of experience, to shatter that creed. It takes a long time, and is a complicated development. That was my case and the case of many of my generation in Central Europe at that time. You see: it is the problem of the conflict of rational criticism and belief. The more strongly you believe, the weaker become your rational critical faculties and your readiness to apply them. Although you flatter yourself you are an intellectual, based on reason and the critical analysis of problems, your capacity to apply that criticism is weakened, even nullified, by the strength of your creed, of your belief. And Stalin built up (or rather Lenin did) so-called Marxism-Leninism as a creed, as a religion.

Now the problem, the eternal problem, was the same with the Nazis in Germany. There were many people who, out of pure motives, joined the Nazi régime and stayed with it to the bitter end, in

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spite of everything that happened and that should have indicated to them that they were on the wrong path. That happened to us. The problem is the conflict between Belief and Reason."

—There must have been particular moments where you did have to fight off the mounting evidence. . . .

GOLDSTÜCKER: "Oh yes, of course! . . ."

—in order to sustain this belief? Let me put to you something, for example, that Michael Foot wrote quite recently about Koestler's "Darkness at Noon." He said that with it "a terrifying shaft of darkness was cast over the past as well as the future", that it was an indelible moment for him. Now I assume you read Koestler's novel—it made no such impact?

GOLDSTÜCKER: "Yes, I read the book in very dramatic circumstances—in 1941 in Oxford during Hitler's march into the heart of Russia. I read at the same time Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, which contained criticism of Stalinist policies in Spain. I read *Darkness at Noon* against Stalin's boast, shortly before the War, that 'whoever dares to put his pig's snout in the Soviet garden will be annihilated.' And now, I saw that instead Hitler's armies are marching towards Moscow. Every day. Total collapse of the Soviet Army.

I'll give you a better example of that onslaught of counter-arguments which I brushed aside. In 1936, as you remember, André Gide went to the Soviet Union and he published his little booklet *Retour de l'URSS.*[1] It created a tremendous wave of discussion, a heated, passionate debate throughout Europe. But by that time we simply rejected, eliminated, anything that criticised the Soviet Union. We even refused to read it—because that was the voice of 'the enemy.' As soon as anyone criticised the Soviet Union, it was the voice of the enemy—at that time the 'Trotskyite enemy.' And if it is an enemy then he has an evil motive which should be rejected without examining it in detail. That was our answer to it. And that, again, is the situation of a believer who does not want his belief undermined."

THE QUALITY OF THE DEFECTION from communism, as it is interpreted and enforced by the Soviet Union in Central and Eastern Europe, has to be assessed in the light of such lengthy devotion, slowly eroded, which preceded disenchantment and rejection.

The Yugoslav Communist Milovan Djilas spent nine years in prison in Yugoslavia, and today, in Belgrade, is consigned officially to the Orwellian category of UNPERSON, ostracised from normal political or social contacts. Djilas, one of the leading figures in Tito's partisan war, was among the first to represent feelings and attitudes which were to emerge as a fundamental post-War heresy.

In his writings Djilas has evoked the practical effects of ideology by recalling the Stalinist world where even the wife of the persecuted Russian poet Boris Pasternak felt constrained to say, ". . . my children love Stalin, and after that they love me." It is witness, Djilas feels, that Communists like himself lived in a state close to hypnotic trance; they were not quite unbalanced, but not quite normal either.

DJILAS: "Communism is not a religion, but the feelings of believers in communism are very close to religious beliefs, to some Puritan beliefs or maybe extreme Catholic beliefs in the Middle Ages."

—A matter not of analysis or reason, then, but of faith?

DJILAS: "For communism the beginning is Marx. For Marx, and for all Communists, it is characteristic that communism has two essential sides. One is really scientific in its analysis. The approach to the facts is scientific—to collect the facts and analyse them rationally. But the *aim* is irrational. The aim is *not* analytic. In the aim you *must* believe: a perfect society, a classless society—in that you must believe. Let me underline that this is the essential trait of communism—this unification, this synthesis of absolute belief and rational analysis."

—Can those two elements, in your view, still be reconciled?

DJILAS: "Well, I came to change my opinion through *praxis*. I saw, for example, the practices of the Soviet Union. At the same time the conflict with Stalin was very important, to protect Yugoslavia and the Yugoslav Party. Later I started to think about what we were: the origins of Yugoslav communism were very similar and very strongly connected with the Soviet Union. I started to see, in the similarity of the system, similar problems and similar 'cults'."

—But when an historian looks at these two periods in your life, which take you from rapture with Stalin to a profound disillusion and rejection of all that he stood for, what are they to make of your old statements? I'd like to remind you of what you said in 1942:

"Can there be any greater honour and happiness than to feel that one's closest and most beloved friend is Stalin? Stalin is the bitterest enemy of all that is inhumane, before whose eyes are unravelled future centuries. There are no riddles in the world that Stalin can not solve."

[1] See in ENCOUNTER (January 1982), Herbert Lottman, "André Gide's Return."

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DJILAS: "This is typical for the believer."

—And you really believed that?

DJILAS: "Yes. Absolutely."

—You really believed that Stalin could solve "all the riddles"?

DJILAS: "It is a literary expression, and the style is romantic. But essentially, I believed it. Stalin was not only a person but also a symbol, an incarnation of the idea for us."

—And then, twenty years later, at the time of your renunciation of Communist doctrine, you were saying:

> **"Stalin was the greatest criminal of all time. In him was joined the criminal senselessness of a Caligula with the refinement of a Borgia and the brutality of Ivan the Terrible."**

DJILAS: "In this I also believed. I am now a believer in freedom, as I believed once in communism. In youth communism for me was freedom; but I saw that it was not so in practice."

WHILE THEIR COMMITMENT LASTED, these men could not be shaken from their conviction that mankind had entered a new era under Stalin, a genius who could do no wrong. As Kolakowski has put it recently, "the unity and loyalty of even a conscience-stricken, guilt-ridden Party was a thousand times more important than frivolous considerations of morality and the like. . . ." This acceptance of and evangelism on behalf of the "historical inevitability" of what was happening around them led on, naturally, to the feeling that there could be no turning back. The force of such convictions enabled them to laugh—for a time—in the face of the Cassandra-like cries from fellow intellectuals like Arthur Koestler.

EDOUARD GOLDSTÜCKER: "It is not a question of individual psychology or, if it is, it applied to very many individuals. Communism is something more than an individual psychological programme."

—But can I put to you Koestler's famous indictment at the West Berlin Cultural Congress in 1950? He said of the intellectuals:

> **"Faced with destiny's challenge they preached neutrality towards the bubonic plague. Mostly they are the victims of a professional disease, the intellectual's estrangement from reality. Having lost touch with reality, they have acquired a devilish art. They can prove everything they believe and believe everything they can prove."**

Do you recognise yourself in that?

GOLDSTÜCKER: "Yes, yes, yes. Only I would add that it takes a very long time to admit that what you embraced, as a young man, with the enthusiasm of your early years, is proving to be false, and that you are clutching to it as long as you can . . . even beyond the reasonable time."

—For fear of what?

GOLDSTÜCKER: "For fear of losing yourself, really —finding yourself deprived of any perspective of the future—the collapse of everything, of your whole world. You see, that was the case—I mentioned the debate about Gide and the Moscow Trials. I was in Moscow in 1935 in a more or less privileged position as a delegate to the last Congress of the Youth Communist International. That was late summer, the beginning of autumn 1935. It was almost a year after the murder of Kirov and the start of the great Stalinist purge and terror. And although people other than Communists were already sitting in the Lubianka, I never felt more free in my life than I felt there. I know now that my every step was followed, and that we moved in an illusory world that did not exist in reality. But, nevertheless, at that time I felt myself to be a free man, absolutely free as never before. I wrote that to my wife, who was my girlfriend at the time. See how far your delusion can take you!"

THE YUGOSLAVS were the first to demonstrate that ideological illusions were not always strong enough to resist reality. Tito's partisans had made their own revolution, in imitation of the "Soviet model" but independently. That fact (and Balkan geography) led to a successful challenge to the Kremlin orthodoxy Stalin had been demanding. The most eloquent testimony of the origins of Tito's heresy has come from Djilas, Tito's Chief of 'Agitation & Propaganda', who saw at first hand the penetration of the Yugoslav Party and *Politburo* by the Soviet secret police. This brought Djilas into direct contact, and conflict, with Stalin.

In his famous *Conversations with Stalin* (1960), Djilas has recorded the change in his own perceptions, from seeing the Soviet leader as God to seeing him as man. It released in him, he says, everything else. Stalin told Djilas repeatedly that communism was to be spread by Soviet power alone, as the only reliable or desirable means. For Djilas (who thinks the West has never understood the importance of ideology for any Soviet leadership) it meant that imperialism had to be ideological too, or else it commanded no legitimacy. Djilas was forced, therefore, to recognise that the ideology was so narrow as to preclude alternative interpretations of the true faith. He came to see Stalin's decisive motivation as Russian national-

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ism, disguised within Communist ideology. That, for Djilas, was enough to begin toppling the walls of the secular city of God. His world suddenly became full of those "basic contradictions" which Communists are so fond of diagnosing in others. Now aged 71, Djilas still lives in Belgrade, and is still a compelling figure. He learned his English while he was imprisoned by Tito in the 1950s (translating Milton's *Paradise Lost* and reading the works of Sir Thomas More).

DJILAS: "How to explain to you? First, the Russians started to organise intelligence services inside our Party, and around the Central Committee. We discovered this even during the War. We asked ourselves: why? There is no difference between us and them. That means that they do not believe in us or that they have some intention. In this way Tito was far-seeing; from the beginning he felt the power and the State more strongly than any of us. He started to understand better that we must save the autonomy of the Party and power from Soviet orders. So really the first substantial differences were connected with Soviet spying methods in Yugoslavia.

The second was connected with my sector of work. I was chief of Agitation & Propaganda; and there the Russians tried to introduce their own methods and give a different interpretation of the Yugoslav revolution, to underestimate it and overestimate the Soviet role. It was so clear in my sector of the work that I started to be in conflict with the Soviet Union. Through revolution we really succeeded in being self-conscious. We had created our own State and police apparatus. I think the quarrel, the disagreements, between me and Stalin started in connection with my remarks to him about the attitudes and behaviour of the Red Army in Yugoslavia. But, thinking in perspective, I believe that Stalin's idea was to cheat me, to use my idealism until some later period. I think he understood that it is relatively easy to play with those 'idealists' in communism. And, probably, if I was not a Yugoslav Communist, a man from a different revolutionary experience and a man with some moral qualities, he would have so treated me. The incident over the Red Army was only one 'visible' incident, but there were many incidents (as I have told you), in the secret services, in propaganda, many unknown incidents. At the same time, some Yugoslav Communists very close to the leadership were very actively in contact with the Soviet Union, intriguing against Tito and Tito's leadership, and of course against me. Many incidents are not well-known. I shall try to explain this in my next book; it is complex."

—You have spoken of the blinding effect that the Communist revelation, its ideology, had for you. In its completeness you had a whole architecture of thought, beautifully arranged in your mind. It held up until 1948. And suddenly it disintegrated. I wonder whether there must not have been some other dimension that you have not really spoken about? Perhaps the burden of guilt for the violence that communism had produced might have been a factor? What of those mass deportations of people, the trials and executions? Was there some sense of repentance growing within you?

DJILAS: "No, I have never felt any repentance. I think that Westerners overestimate the violence in communism as something very decisive, in the sense of inhuman. Violence is part of any politics, and communism is of course strongly connected with such ideas. But I think the essentials are those utopian conceptions, as I told you. For example, if Stalin had really succeeded in creating a perfect society, nobody would have reproached him for his crimes (or perhaps only a small group of humanitarian philosophers). But all of Europe and the Left would have been enthusiastic and said: 'Yes, this is not a good way or a good manner, but it is inevitable . . . and for such great achievements we must pardon this way.' "

—And yet I was struck by something that you wrote when you were reviewing the book of Nadezhda Mandelstam (the wife of the Soviet poet who died in the Gulag). You note that "the black depths of immeasurable and unjustified violence calmed her anger and aroused her capacity for thought." It occurred to me that you were talking about yourself, that when you looked back on what you had done—on those "black depths of immeasurable violence"—that you really could not go on with it? In retrospect, you could not face yourself?

DJILAS: "That was the War, the Revolution. I did my duty as did the other Yugoslav leaders. They created a revolutionary Army. This isn't easy; it can't be done without some conflict, some cruel methods even. But this is normal in war, and especially one must keep in mind what war we had. We developed small partisan units and there was also conflict between different political groups—with very cruel terror against Communists, not only from the German occupiers but from our own domestic police and the counter-revolutionary group—this was civil war connected with national war. It was complicated. I will not say that our Revolution was not cruel—it was—but no more, no less, than other revolutions."

SO THE REAL REASON *for disillusionment is the sheer failure of the Communists, and your understanding that you too had failed? The sheer failure to achieve what you set out to do?*

DJILAS: "Yes, this is true. We see now from Belgrade to Peking there are many variations of this

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society, but not any of them is successful. One might be a little worse than the other, one a little better, if you compare them."

—But when was it really apparent to you that nothing was happening as you Communists said it was going to, that none of these Marxist scientific predictions was being fulfilled?

DJILAS: "Too late. When I was in prison. Even when I wrote *The New Class*, it was (from my point of view) still a Marxist book. But in prison, at the end, I understood that 'science' is not enough to change society. In general I think that science may help in politics, but politics is something different from science. Politics is using the sciences but society cannot be built up, or ruled, by science."

—Was it the realisation that the standard of living does not necessarily rise in relation to industrialisation? that collectivisation of agriculture, central planning, and public property do not lead to a classless society?

DJILAS: "There is no such country! No such country. And I think there is something wrong with the idea as such. By 'scientific method' it is possible to build up a factory, or a town or city, or a street—but not a society. A society is the product of so many unpredictable factors, of human passions and different social groups, that cannot be built by science. Even the prediction that with industrialisation the problems will be resolved is nonsense. We see from Western countries which are more industrialised than the USSR that they have serious social and economic problems. And this is *not* only the problem of capitalist 'property.' Now we see that even property is less important than social theoreticians, including Marx, taught—that with the liquidation of capitalist property the problems would be solved. *After* this . . . the problems start *after* this."

—Was your belief in Communism justified, then?

DJILAS: "It was absolutely not justified. But, contrary to my belief, communism still is a very strong reality. My belief in communism not only was not justified, but everything that it taught happened contrary. The withdrawing of the State? The State grows stronger and stronger. The liquidation of oppression? Oppression is relatively stronger and stronger. A classless society? We have really one privileged group and all other social groups are oppressed. Liquidation of war? A great ideal of communism, yet we now have wars between Communist states: not between 'capitalist states' but among Communists, and very cruel wars. Standards of living? They have been going up in Eastern Europe, but not as absolutely as if the Western system was there. The Western system now, as it is, is a better system. I say this openly, not because I am a partisan for capitalism; I'm not. But this system in the West is better. It is more human. In the West you have everything you have in the East, and you have something more. Political freedoms and greater possibilities. In every way it is better. Communism predicted an end to Imperialism; we now have New Imperialism. The Soviet Union is basically military and imperialist, comparable with the Turkish Empire."

—I realise that Turkey, of course, has a special significance, in historical terms, for Yugoslavia. But. . . .

DJILAS: "There are many similarities. Of course, that happened in the Middle Ages, and we are now in the industrial era. But I think that the communism of today is industrial feudalism. I think this is very near to the truth. Any such formulation is schematic, not completely accurate and so on. But consider, for example, how the entire apparatus is connected with the Centre. You cannot be director of the factory without some approval from the Centre. All privileged places, the better paid, are in the hands of the members of the Party. And the Party is hierarchical, just as it was in the Turkish state during the Ottoman Empire. The central power is united with religion as it was in the Turkey of the Sultan who was, at the same time, the Caliph. The *Politburo* in the Soviet Union is also the owner of the ideology."

THROUGHOUT, I think (and in those last words particularly), Djilas illuminates the decisive importance which Stalin's policy of national humiliation for the countries of the Communist bloc assumed. He supports the relevance of Churchill's challenge to Stalin at Yalta: "The eagle should permit the small birds to sing and care not wherefore they sang. . . ."

When it was made unequivocally apparent to him that the "small birds" were to be caged and muted, Djilas—first and alone among the post-War Communist hierarchy—felt compelled to signal that scientific socialism was a false dawn. The romantic Utopian, fiercely represented in Djilas, led a first wave of departure from the mind, if not yet the body, of the Communist Church. Djilas came to the view that Utopia in power had failed to fulfil predictions and transcend the issue of nationalism and independence as between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. It re-created it. It also failed to transcend "Class", and rather than abolishing it had introduced a "new class" of unassailable privilege.

At this stage, however, Czechoslovak Communists like Edouard Goldstücker were still taking a different view of the possibilities.

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GOLDSTÜCKER: "I was terribly shocked in 1948 at the breach between the Cominform and Tito. That was already for me a time of sneaking doubts. But again we saw that Yugoslavia had two things in her inheritance which made her situation more difficult than ours. First, she inherited a terrible hatred among the smaller nations composing it, which it would take generations to overcome. Secondly, Yugoslavia had never really had a democratic tradition as we did. We thought that with our democratic tradition, and the possibility of solving our Czech/Slovak problem amicably, we stood the chance of creating a European socialism different from Tito's and different, of course, from Stalin's."

—Djilas's dissent went, however, to the very core of belief at this time. What did you think of his critique?

GOLDSTÜCKER: "I thought that his *New Class*—I read it when it was new—was somewhat exaggerated; he went a little too far by calling it a New Class; it was not a 'class' in the real sense of the word. It is not a *constant* class because there the privileges and power begin and end with your function and do not constitute 'class.' Even Ceausescu's family is not eternal or permanent!"

—How much comfort is that to those who watch the big black cars, with their blinds drawn down, speed up and down the boulevards?

GOLDSTÜCKER: "You know the definition of those cars by the people—'What is that black Czech car?' Answer: 'It is the modern means of communication of the proletariat used by its representatives!'

But you see in Yugoslavia things tend much more, let us say, to be crudely or cruelly done than in our country. In their country the alternative is either consent or mortal enmity. In Czechoslovakia that was never the tradition."

IN SPITE OF his first doubts in 1948, Goldstücker maintained his Party loyalty. The evidence was mounting that the only permissible ideological line for the loyal Czech Communists to follow was complicity in Stalin's determination to deprive the nation of his historical and cultural identity.

GOLDSTÜCKER: "The 'nationality problem' is the key problem in Central Europe and in Europe altogether. I said at the Kafka Conference in 1963—and it was quoted against me after 1968—that in the transition period between Capitalism and Socialism the individual citizen can experience a more acute form of alienation than even under Capitalism, as our experiences show. What we now see, we, the self-deceived generation, is that instead of socialism, the Soviet Revolution brought the Russian Empire, and it is proceeding as all other empires proceeded in the past—building itself up as a larger and larger unit of suppressed and oppressed peoples. Engels says somewhere that the Rationalist philosophers firmly believed that they were ushering in 'the Age of Reason', and he said that instead of the Age of Reason, 'the Age of Money' came.

We were convinced that we were ushering in the Age of Fraternity or Equality or Liberty—genuinely this time. We see now, after all those experiences, that what really came is a Russian Empire. There is a direct line between all the dreams about the greatness of Russia and Stalin's actual policy. Read one of the key 19th-century books in this respect—Nicolai Danilevsky's *Russia and Europe* of 1869. He proposes the creation of a Slav Federation there as a means of rejuvenating and recreating mankind. He lists the territories which should belong to the Slav Federation. They are the territories now under the domination of Moscow (with one exception, the district of Constantinople).

Between 1948 and 1951, when I was arrested, the amount of surreptitious 'Russification' of Czechoslovakia was breathtaking. All the traditional cultural connections with the West were systematically cut off. Our children were not allowed to know that radio was invented by Marconi; they had to believe it was Popov. The electric bulb was not invented by Edison but by Zagorchkin. The only valid biological ideas were those of Michurin and Lysenko. Delegations of Soviet peasants came to Czechoslovakia to teach our peasants to produce proper agricultural results. They were hailed as 'the Masters of High Yields.' Later, when I was in prison and after some three-and-a-half years had access to newspapers, I read Khrushchev's report listing the yields. They were miserable, horrible. The milk yield was ridiculous. Nevertheless, they were hailed as 'the Masters of High Yields.'

And, of course, there was the militarisation of life, which was directly evolved from the Czarist system. The policeman as a force, and the non-commissioned officer wielding a high degree of power. It was a hierarchisation of our society, something quite alien to us, which derived directly from the Czarist régimes."

—But how can you say the "Russification" was breathtaking when you Communists not only sought it, but exacted it from Benes? Benes made the disastrous agreement with the Russians that the Czech army would be rebuilt on the Russian model, that cultural life would become more intimate, that trade with the West would be turned round. . . .

GOLDSTÜCKER: "There was no such agreement. Trade and so on was being systematically undermined and destroyed after February 1948."

—But it is there in the 1943 agreement, in black and white:

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the reorientation of Czechoslavakia's trade with the West.

GOLDSTÜCKER: "Oh, yes, but that did not mean to destroy wilfully and systematically all trade connections with the West."

—But you have to be almost purblind not to see the implications of it?

GOLDSTÜCKER: "No, no. For instance, the destruction of our light industry, the china and glass and textile industries, where we had great export possibilities—that was deliberate sabotage, from Stalin's point of view, to cut off Czechoslovakia's connections with the West."

SUCH FUNDAMENTAL DISENCHANTMENT in the "Age of Longing", with its ambition to secure "perfection on Earth", is understandable when the means-and-ends of that attempt were forcibly viewed, as in Goldstücker's case, from a judas-hole in a political prison. But their origins anticipated the experience of Purges and Show-trials.

In a remark to the US diplomat Averell Harriman during the War, Stalin had said of the tremendous sacrifices being made by the Russians in the course of the battles in the East: "We are under no illusions that they are fighting for us. They are fighting for Mother Russia." After the War, Stalin quickly revealed that his object was not merely to restore the authority of the Party, eroded as it had been in the patriotic fraternity of the War experience, but to raise that authority and Party ideology to new heights. How would a new post-War generation react?

It was into this context that one of the most significant intellects of the present day was introduced—Leszek Kolakowski. Aged eighteen in 1945, he soon became a lecturer at the graduate institute for Communist Party members in Warsaw, and was Professor of the History of Philosophy at Warsaw University when in 1968 he was dismissed for political reasons. Kolakowski was one of a new generation in Eastern Europe at the War's end, a generation "hot for certainties" which saw in communism, as he has told us, not only deliverance from "an obscurantist tradition" but a body of ideas "offering a large, internationalist and rational view of the world", "the most effective instrument against the barbarism in Europe" which had been unleashed by Hitler.

Today Leszek Kolakowski is credited with having opened a new era in Marxist criticism with his profound survey of the crisis through which a great part of the Marxist intelligentsia has been passing. An early but obviously seminal experience of Kolakowski makes it clear that while the military frontier in Europe (across which the Western NATO Alliance confronts the Warsaw Pact) is one reality, there is another and dramatic divide: the gulf which separates the "satellite countries" from the Soviet Union.

KOLAKOWSKI: "I remember very well a visit to Moscow in 1950 (still under Stalin). With a small group of colleagues I was sent to Moscow by the Central Committee of the Polish Party in order to get acquainted, in the Holy Shrine, with both the philosophical and political ideas of Marxism a little better. It was quite an experience. We spent three months in Moscow having contacts with various Soviet scholars and intellectuals, listening to their lectures, etc. We were really quite shattered. We were young people—I can't say we were learned or wise—yet we couldn't fail to notice the absolutely miserable intellectual level.

It was really a disaster. We couldn't fail to notice the destruction of various cultural areas in the Soviet Union, the miserable level of philosophy, of social thought, of painting; and we were disturbed by what we saw. We had not seen much, of course; we were not really aware of its extent. We were isolated, and we had no idea of the extent of repression. Nevertheless, in spite of our political commitment, we had to recognise some extremely unpleasant and alarming aspects of this society. Still, we were trying to explain everything to ourselves, so that we could, somehow, reconcile what we saw with our political commitment. But it was a general impression of intellectual destruction. All those who were supposed to be the luminaries of official Soviet intellectual life proved to be mentally Neanderthals. They were people of an incredibly low level of knowledge; and that could only disturb us."

—Forgive me for suggesting it, but is this something which goes beyond the traditional Polish contempt for the quality of Russian intellectual life—which is, wouldn't you agree, an historical attitude of the Polish people? Wasn't it much more than that?

KOLAKOWSKI: "Yes. It is true that, as the result of various historical experiences and hostilities, there developed in Poland a sort of contempt for what is Russian. It's a contempt which I have always found (and still do) very regrettable—because I like very many sides of Russian culture. My father was born in St Petersburg; he was entirely bilingual in Polish and Russian, and he liked Russian literature. So did I. One can say there is a certain ambiguity in this attitude of Poles to Russia. On the one hand, contempt; on the other hand, a certain fascination (especially with Russian literature). But my experiences in Moscow had nothing to do with this tradition. Nothing whatsoever. We came to the Soviet Union full of confidence and without any prejudices against the Russians."

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AND SO, IN THE MOST sensitive province of the Soviet Empire, Stalin's attempt to recruit the new generation for a "clean start" (as he had said at Yalta) foundered almost at once. The moral and cultural shock which direct experience of the "new Enlightenment" in its homeland had upon men of influence like Kolakowski spelt the certain failure of the attempt to communise Poland in the Soviet image.

There are echoes of the Polish philosopher's feelings in the testimony of the Czech Communist Edouard Goldstücker, whose perceptions of the moral righteousness of the "progressive" Soviet state only very slowly dissolved over half a lifetime . . . to the point where he felt no more excuses could be made.

GOLDSTÜCKER: "I saw the Soviet Union in the best of lights, although there were doubts which I immediately suppressed. In 1935 I was in the Soviet Union when they had that experiment of a different kind of working week: they wanted to do away with Sunday as a religious holiday and to make every seventh day a free day. When I walked along Moscow's main road, Gorky Street, on the eve of such a free day, I saw drunken people lying in the main road of Moscow every few steps. Dead drunk, lying in the gutter. It shocked me horribly. It was half dark and you almost stepped on them. But, again, the immediate, almost instinctive reaction was to say: 'Well, this is Russia, the old neglected society of the muzhiks, and they have not had time to overcome this yet.'

Twenty-seven years later I was in Moscow—in 1962—and I saw a man (it was the end of November), an elderly man coming out of a shop which sold vodka with that little—at that time three-rouble—vodka bottle. He opened it in front of me outside the shop, and drank it at one go. Then he started walking, straight into a lamppost with his forehead—and started bleeding. That time my reaction was quite different.

This was not Czarism any more—it was the great tragedy which happened to us in Central Europe. We became dominated by a régime which is historically backward, much more backward than we are. It has very rarely happened in history that the colonising power was historically backward compared to the colonised."

IT WAS IN March 1953 that lightning struck the very top of the Marxist-Leninist mountain. Stalin died. He slowly choked to death over three days, after suffering a stroke at his dacha a few miles outside Moscow. Desolate by then, and embittered against the world, he had been found as he lived—alone. The scene has been graphically described by his daughter Svetlana. The household was too frightened to approach him closely; the doctors applied leeches to the back of his neck, and a special session of the Academy of Sciences was called to sanction unavailing treatment. His life was full of menace to the end—and his death was a release from a burden which had become insupportable to all.

The outcome of the power struggles and palace revolutions in the Kremlin over the next three years confirmed the immutability of the status quo and the Party's total grip. But the moral desolation of communism shook for a time the entire edifice of power.

By 1956, Stalin's eventual successor, Khrushchev, was providing the spectacle (in the famous secret speech to the Twentieth Party Congress) of Stalin's most faithful accomplice denouncing Stalin's crimes.

LEONARD SCHAPIRO: "It was enormously significant. I think, incidentally, it was very courageous of Khrushchev to agree because, as Tocqueville pointed out a long time ago, the most dangerous time for a bad régime comes when it tries to improve. Here was a definite shift for the better in the Soviet régime, a recognition anyway of some of the awful things that had happened. It was fraught with great danger and in fact for some years afterwards, perhaps even to the present day, the Soviet Union was faced with certain risks as a result of taking that step. The force of 1956 is not yet spent.

The real significance of it was not so much what was disclosed (many people must have known), but that it did something that was against the rules.

You see, Ideology, as the French scholar Alain Besançon points out, is primarily a system which exists on a false framework—but this false framework can never be challenged. In other words, Stalin was wholly good; and criticism of the Soviet Union was a pure invention of 'cold warriors.' The moment that is challenged, the moment you talk in relatively truthful terms of something that has happened in the past—even though everybody does know about it—the shock of this happening is tremendous. I remember the sense of absolute shock, not so much at the Secret Speech (which was not very secret, incidentally: it was pushed through all the letterboxes of Eastern Europe, no doubt by the *KGB*), but the fact that this was now *openly* talked about had a tremendous effect in Russia and in Europe. I think it was enormously significant; it cannot be overrated. I imagine that it is one of the most powerful effects of undermining the strength of communism, that the strength of communism now is not in its doctrines, but in something else. It is the class struggle, class warfare, which attracts many people—the have-nots against the haves, or, as people visualise it, anti-Americanism. This is the very important element in communism. It is motives of that kind rather than ideological loyalties."

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—Since the Khrushchev speech in 1956, how successful have the Communists been with claiming that Marxism, the great deliverance, was somehow falsified by this one man, Joseph Stalin?

SCHAPIRO: "I think they have been effective enough for their purposes. They have obviously regained their control, for example, over the Fronts, the various Communist fronts. They do very nicely. There are very many repercussions of Communist overt and covert operations which persist; which goes to show that communism is not, primarily, a matter of ideology and thought and ideas but of *organisation*. This is what Lenin intended it to be. This is the difference between Marx and Lenin. For Marx it was a 'scientific idea', and Marx is full of outbursts against people who are 'unscientific' and are liars and disregard the evidence. I am sure he really believed that. He was an old-fashioned German scholar in some respects, and the idea that anyone would fiddle evidence he would regard as preposterous. Lenin transformed all that into an organisational system, a system of using anarchy for your own ends, and for controlling power when once you got it. This is what communism has been ever since, and to some extent the intellectual covering of it is illusory."

KHRUSHCHEV'S SPEECH put an end to "the silence of the grave" which Stalin had, for so many years, imposed on open discussion and disagreement. When Stalin died there were estimated to be some fifteen million people in concentration camps in the Soviet Union. The new leadership set out to convince the world that Communist power was intact, while seeking to convey that its condemnation of Stalinism was profound and sincere.

However, it has yet to explain officially what specific elements in the theory of Soviet communism are assignable to it. The solemn triflings and impenetrable obscurities of the body of ideology began to come to pieces in the hands, not of those who chose to exploit what, as Professor Schapiro makes clear, was a moment of great and obvious weakness in order to destroy the Communist faith, but of those who were charged with breathing new life into it.

LESZEK KOLAKOWSKI: "The mid-1950s was a period in Poland (in other countries as well, but particularly in Poland) where there was this movement trying, somehow, to rejuvenate Communist ideology or Marxist ideas—to get rid of the monstrosities of Stalinism, and to make communism both intellectually respectable and morally worthy. This movement was called 'Revisionism' and was branded with this name by the Party leaders."

—Your purpose was what? to rescue Communism from degeneration? an attempt to start afresh?

KOLAKOWSKI: "I am not really able to say exactly what our thinking was at this period. It was a mixture of genuine desire and genuine belief that Communism *can* somehow be rescued morally and intellectually, and on the other hand a little bit of calculation. We tried to speak, to some extent, in the language of inherited Marxist stereotypes. We looked, in Marx, for ideas which clearly run against the entire Leninist and Stalinist doctrine and practice. We tried to oppose Marxism to Leninism (and to Stalinism), and for a few years we used the language of Marxist clichés. To some extent it was calculated, to some extent it was a real belief. Because we were still Party members, we spoke roughly within categories which were somehow accepted within the Party's ideological tradition. Our voices were heard.

'Revisionism' in Poland played a certain role in the disintegration of Communist doctrine precisely because it appealed to the same stereotypes. The Party and the people in the Party apparatus, the Party's ideologists, were insensitive to arguments coming entirely from outside; whereas voices coming from the *inside* were more important. Revisionism proved to be to that extent effective. Its advocates were Party members and Party activists; and therefore 'Revisionism' cut its own roots, so to speak, by its own effectiveness. By destroying the Party ideology and thus contributing to the process whereby the principles of communism really became irrelevant, it somehow made itself useless. After a certain period there was nothing to revise any more! . . ."

IN THE TUMULTS which followed Stalin's death and denunciation the Soviet Union faced for the first time widespread unrest throughout Eastern Europe.

At this distance, few things seem as eloquent of that precarious time for Communist rule—and the nature and limits of the Party's efforts to come to terms with Stalin's legacy—than the evidence which has recently emerged from Poland. Some background interviews conducted in 1971 with the Polish leader Wladislaw Gomulka have come to light in the West. Gomulka, who was at the head of government in Poland for fourteen years, reveals that in the course of a two-hour shouting match (as he calls it) with Khrushchev in 1957, the question of Soviet responsibility for the Katyn Massacre was raised between them. The murder of some 15,000 Polish officer prisoners in the Soviet Union during the time of Stalin's Pact with Hitler had always been denied, and all discussion of it prevented. Katyn remained a central block in any evaluation of

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Polish/Soviet relations. Gomulka records Khrushchev as "obviously blaming Stalin for everything", and saying of Stalin that "his account is so loaded with crimes that he can stand one more. . . ." Gomulka goes on to admit that, while he later thought he had been wrong (and regretted he'd done nothing to follow up Khrushchev's suggestion), "I simply did not feel strong enough to reverse myself on Katyn." And so that lie was perpetuated.

At the time (in Gomulka's words) "the nation was like a horse breaking free from its harness. . . . Lots of young people dedicated to the Party came forward to help. They were the dangerous ones. They talked without stop about democracy when what we wanted was discipline and obedience!"

The successful stand of the Polish revisionists and their challenge spread, for the spirit of criticism had been fostered, and it flourished. The unexpected climax came in Hungary in the uprising of October 1956. A central figure in the events which culminated in the Soviet invasion of Hungary, following the dramatic overthrow of a Communist government there, was General Bela Kiraly.

KIRALY: "In any historical event there are overriding causes and immediate causes. The overriding cause was, unquestionably, total disappointment with the totalitarian régime, with Soviet domination, with the exploited economy, with discrimination against people because of—I don't know—their 'origin' or something. In other words, total disappointment with the state of the individual and of the nation. That is the overriding cause. But out of that revolution does not come. There must be some little thing which triggers off the whole explosion.

In June 1956 when pressure forced the Party to make a change in the leadership, the stupid Stalinists, instead of letting Imre Nagy into the leadership, exchanged Matyas Rakosi for Erno Gero. That was almost parallel with the Poles, but how much wiser they were! They brought in Gomulka. At the time Gomulka, like Imre Nagy, was thought to have been a 'reformer.' Gomulka at that time symbolised the forces of change. Had Rakosi been replaced in Hungary by Imre Nagy that June, there would not have been a revolution. I am as convinced of that as that I am sitting here. The revolution's immediate causes started then with the installation of Gero, who continued the stubborn Stalinist line and thereby increased the discontent. The discontent became louder and louder.

Secondly, on 23 October, when the Party faced a mass demonstration in Budapest, even then the revolution could have been avoided. But that hot moment was the last historic chance for the Communist Party of Hungary. If they had been wise enough to say 'All right, Imre Nagy, come and take over the government'—and at that moment Imre Nagy, on the radio—nice, soft, compromising, soothing—had said, 'All right, Hungarian friends, I take over the government, we return to the reform programmes of 1953, go home, sleep, we will talk tomorrow', then no revolution would have occurred.

But instead Gero came on the radio with his sharp, arrogant, defiant, Stalinist, suppressive voice and said 'We will show you!' That was the last chance for the Party. They missed the chance—and one single shot could make the revolution. One single shot *did* make the revolution."

THE HUNGARIANS tried but failed to repeat the limited Polish achievement of October 1956. What was at stake in both Poland and Hungary was whether the basic nature of a Communist Party could be changed. Against the fulminations of Khrushchev and the final preparations for invasion of Poland by the Red Army, the Polish Communist Party had stood its ground, united in recalling Wladislaw Gomulka to the leadership. Gomulka had been deposed and imprisoned at Stalin's command during the campaign to crush Tito and his heresy of "national communism."

The possibility of such a change at the top, even in the face of outright Soviet opposition, prompted similar efforts in Hungary. Against a groundswell of popular discontent, the Hungarian Party—which after years of effective repression had given all the appearance of invincibility—suddenly began to disintegrate.

Early in the morning of 23 October 1956, students at Budapest University adopted a programme which called for the reconstitution of the government under the leadership of another Communist, Imre Nagy, who like Gomulka in Poland had been purged and imprisoned at the time of the Tito heresy. A student march that day turned into a mass demonstration. The same evening, shots were fired (probably by the Hungarian secret police) into the crowd, and the mass demonstration turned into an open revolt by the nation.

General Kiraly was released from prison (after the Party purges of the early 1950s) just three weeks before the Hungarian Uprising. He became Commander-in-Chief of the Hungarian National Guard and emerged as the elected leader of the "freedom-fighter forces", during the Soviet invasion.

KIRALY: "The Hungarian revolution was not planned. Nobody wanted a revolution. The Hungarians demonstrated for the Poles' successful and peaceful solution. No one planned a revolution. They were drawn into it by violence."

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—To what extent was help expected from the West, and what part did that play in the calculations of those who, like you, put themselves at the head of the spontaneous events?

KIRALY: "It *was* spontaneous and *not* planned. During the revolution, when the Soviet tanks appeared, of course such thoughts began to emerge. I have an eye-witness. When I was already elected Commander-in-Chief of the freedom-fighter force, the National Guard of Hungary, the *New York Times* Correspondent in Vienna, John MacCormac, came to my headquarters with a friend who was a diplomat. MacCormac asked me exactly what you are asking me now. He said: 'Tomorrow it will be on the front page of the *New York Times*. Should I print that you want the Marines?' And I told him: 'No, sir, we do not want the Marines. We want peace with the Soviet Union. If you bring in the Marines it will be the Third World War, and after that nothing will be left of Hungary. I do not want to incinerate Hungary.' Now, many young hot-headed freedom-fighters, after they arrived in the West, began to say, 'You let us down. We waited for the British, the French, the Americans —you did not come.' But you know, the political debate during this time was *not* based on the return of the Soviet Union. The hope against hope was that, after all, they would *not* return. The debate was what kind of neutrality we would like to have—the Austrian or the Finnish kind. No one knew the precise definition of either. But *that* is what was on the mind of the people: how to have a neutrality which would not humiliate the Soviet Union and would be acceptable to the Soviet Union. That was the basic question, *not* armed help from the West."

—On the other hand you were, as you remind us, Commander of forces in a revolution against the ruling Communist power. Where did you think help would come from? Where were you looking for help in sustaining your momentum?

KIRALY: "Here, for the first time, I have to disagree with the statement buried in that question. We were *not* fighting against the Communist Party. Imre Nagy was a Communist. Imre Nagy remained a member of the Central Committee of the *renewed* Communist Party. They were fighting against 'men of blood', against the secret police—but *not* against the Communist Party. The Hungarian Revolution was not an anti-Communist revolution. I must protest against that."[2]

—Two hundred thousand people out in the streets. . . .

KIRALY: "Not against the Communist Party. It was *for* democracy, yes. It was against totalitarianism, yes."

—And therefore against the Communist Party?

KIRALY: "No, no, no, no, no. The Hungarian people were wiser than that. Wisdom dictated that you cannot just abolish the Communist Party at the threshold of the Soviet Union, with Soviet garrisons in Hungary. It would be an offence against the wisdom of the Hungarian people. Look at the 'Sixteen Points.' They wanted *reform* within the Party. . . . You know what I would say? 'Euro-Communism' started in Budapest: because if you look at the university students' 'Sixteen Points', it is for internal democracy in the Communist Party itself, for internal democracy in the government. For Euro-Communism, yes.

We did not look for outside help. I have to tell you, it is not a heroic thing that I am saying! For the last 25 years I have been a student of history, I acquired a Ph.D. at Columbia University, and being an historian commits me to tell the truth. I cannot picture myself as a hero who stood up at the barricades and looked for armed help from the West. You know what I was looking for? Compromise! I would have gone out of my way to establish a settlement acceptable to the Soviet Union because I knew that Western military power would *not* come at all, and I dreaded a war on Hungarian soil."

THE FORCES FOR REFORM which in the Poland of the 1950s had been contained within the exclusive framework of the Party's authority, went beyond such constraints in Budapest. The new government in Hungary led by Imre Nagy included non-Communist politicians, and Nagy was also pledged to negotiate the withdrawal of Soviet armed forces (for which, of course, he had no mandate from the Russians). The Hungarian Communist Party, however, confirmed Nagy's programme and his leadership. In Moscow, when the Soviet leaders came to the conclusion that Nagy could not limit demands in keeping with a Communist Hungary under Soviet tutelage, they launched an all-out invasion by the Red Army. Fighting went on well into November. The uprising was crushed. Nagy was later hanged by the Russians. The present leader of the Soviet Union, Yuri Andropov, then Moscow's Ambassador in Budapest, was intimately involved in these events, and their outcome.

KIRALY: "When the Soviet aggression came, it was a very dramatic moment. I reported to Imre Nagy on the Soviet movements every half hour. We called

[2] See, on this point, the analysis of Zdenek Mlynar on the difference between Warsaw and Prague and Budapest, "A Phoenix out of the Polish Ashes?", ENCOUNTER, May 1982.

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each other '*Comrade*'—not in the Communist Party sense, but in the Hungarian sense. There is a beautiful Hungarian word, '*Bajtas*' which means comrade-in-arms but you cannot translate it. I told him that this is the moment when you have to go on the radio and announce that Hungary is being atacked by the Soviet Union and we are at war with the Soviet Union. As a military man I had to give that advice to him because the Minister of Defence, General Pal Maleter, was in the Soviet Headquarters.

And Nagy told me, 'No, no, no. I forbid you to go to the radio with any such message. You have to know, as a General Staff officer, that it is a political decision.'

I said, 'All right. That is what I am asking you. Should I, or should *you*? We are at war with the Soviet Union.'

And he said, 'No. We will never be at war with the Soviet Union.' "

—Even then?

KIRALY: "Even then. And he said, 'Andropov is with me.' And he tried to call Moscow because 'Andropov assures me there is some misunderstanding here.'

Five minutes later I called Imre Nagy back and told him, 'Comrade (*Bajtas*) Prime Minister, the Russian tanks are in our square—I can count them, one, two, twenty-five—and they are turning towards the Parliament!'

As we did not have anti-tank guns in our headquarters, we just waited to see whether they would attack us. They did not. They turned towards the Parliament. And then Imre Nagy's response was very dramatic. He said, 'Thank you. I do not need any more reports.'

No more reports from the Commander-in-Chief? What is going on?

I instantly ordered my staff to go over to the other side of the Danube where we had a more protected headquarters than the one in Pest. On our way there we turned on the radio. Imre Nagy's voice was there with this dramatic announcement. 'Imre Nagy speaking, the Prime Minister of Hungary. I inform the Hungarian nation and the world that Soviet forces have attacked Hungary with the obvious intention of overthrowing the legally constituted government. Our troops are fighting. . . .' That was his last statement. In other words, my last report that the tanks were already within shooting distance of the Parliament—only then did Imre Nagy evolve from his somewhat wishful thinking that the Soviet Union would not butcher another socialist country. He was a Utopian."

—And all the time Andropov, the Soviet Ambassador, was in Nagy's office assuring him this was not going to happen?

KIRALY: "I am absolutely sure he got an instruction. He was there to lure the Hungarian government into inactivity when the Soviet troops were already on the move."

—Djilas said subsequently that Nagy (whom he greatly admired, and who, he suggested, would have provided a model of a socialist state of great importance for the future of Eastern Europe, and a way out of its dilemma for the Soviet Union) had a very narrow understanding of the Soviet Union. He suggests that Nagy was naive. He adduces as evidence for this, that Nagy put his fate in the hands of the Yugoslavs when he took refuge in their Legation because they were a "liberal country", and this was, as Djilas says, nonsense.

KIRALY: "Of course, I understand in an objective way your criticism. But with hundreds of tanks invading, here was a man at a dividing point of history. He is moving out of the Parliament, giving up power. A great power has invaded your country. You are the man whose prestige is such that whatever you say people will follow you. Now, unquestionably, he says until the last, 'I hope that the Soviet Union will not be such a beast as to attack a country which is not anti-Communist.' It did *not* want to be a member of NATO. What can he say? He can say, 'All right, the Soviet Union attacked us—fight back, to the last cottage.' Or he can say, 'The Soviet Union has attacked us—we will lose the war—lay down your arms.'

There was no other choice for Imre Nagy on the morning of the fourth of November 1956. He knew that, with war, we were now suppressed. There was no hope. He did not have the heart to say, 'Fight until the last cottage.' He really was an emotional Hungarian patriot, Communist or not. He did not want to inspire any more heroes—we had more than enough heroes. So the other course was to lay down arms.

In Hungarian history there is a moment which is debated down to the present day. In 1849, Lajos Kossuth decided to leave the country and invested all political power in the Commander-in-chief of the Army, General Gorgey. Gorgey went to Russia and said that he wanted to lay down arms, unconditionally. Ever since there has been this 'Gorgey question' in the heart and mind of every Hungarian six-year-old. Imre Nagy did not want to be a Gorgey. He did not say, 'Lay down your arms, there is no other hope.' He would have liked to save Hungarian blood without becoming another Gorgey. He closed the door of his office and—where to go?

I can add another footnote to the whole thing. When it was crystal clear, after midnight, that it was a Soviet aggression—I already knew it was war but we did not use the term 'war'—I told Imre Nagy that we still have small aeroplanes at Kelenfold, a little airport. It was not occupied by the Russians. He could get out of the country with a few associ-

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ates. He said, 'I will never leave the country.' He could have flown to Vienna; he could have gone to Frankfurt. He did not want to leave the country. It is a pathetic thing. I am sorry that Shakespeare is not alive—he could have written about the whole Imre Nagy case—it would have been better than *Hamlet*."

THE RUSSIANS SAVED their hegemony in Eastern Europe only by their vast and preponderant military might, and just at the moment when demands for freedom *under* communism were seen by them as demands for freedom *from* communism. Hopes that the Polish "October" would lead on to a transformation of the totalitarian communism Stalin had installed proved to be a fantasy. All overt dissent was, once more, ruthlessly extinguished. "1956 in Budapest" was added to the critique of the character and ambition of Soviet communism in power which gathered momentum following Stalin's death—in particular whether its innate character is the inevitable outcome of immersion in Marxist political theory and general philosophy.

LESZEK KOLAKOWSKI: "Even now I wouldn't say that there was a fateful historical destiny whereby Marxist doctrine must have necessarily led to the Stalinist dictatorship in Russia. No, there were many historical accidents at work. I do not mean only, and obviously, that Marx did not imagine communism as a concentration camp. The fact is that a series of historical accidents, none of which was necessary, led to the establishment of the rule of a Party professing Marxist ideology in Russia.

I would phrase the question somewhat differently. How was it possible that Marxist doctrine, with its ostensibly humanist and internationalist ideas, could have become such a pretty ideological instrument for justifying and glorifying the most oppressive Imperialist system of the 20th century? And to what extent, in order to fulfil that role, had this doctrine to be deformed or distorted?

My argument is that it did not need to be fundamentally distorted—only readjusted. Then it could have played this role quite successfully. In fact it was Marx's (not Stalin's) idea that the whole idea of communism may be summed up in a single phrase —'the abolition of private property.' So it was not 'un-Marxist' to claim that once we abolish private property, mankind is liberated. It was Marx and not Stalin who believed that communism consists of centralised State rule of the entire economic process, that 'economy' in the old sense would cease to exist and everything would be 'administered' by the State.

Marx took over from Saint-Simon a fine-sounding phrase: that, in a Socialist society, political government would cease to exist, and would be replaced by 'administration of things.' He did not think about the fact that you cannot administer 'things' without using people for the purpose. If it is the State which runs everything, which nationalises everything, and if everything is made 'state property'—then people are made state property as well. This was Bakunin's point. He was not comparable to Marx, to be sure—Marx was much superior intellectually; nevertheless Bakunin's critique was very penetrating. He somehow noticed that state socialism, developed by Marx, would lead to state tyranny."

STULTIFIED IDEOLOGY and economic fiasco led within a few years to the next full-blown crisis in Central Europe—Czechoslovakia in 1968.

Under the nominal leadership of Alexander Dubcek, a movement for reform inside the Czech Communist Party set out to lay the cornerstones of a new edifice of theory which would stand on the ruins of Stalin's dictatorship. They adopted the label of "Communism with a Human Face."

These Czech reformers maintained that the socialised economy could not be revived if Stalin's model stayed in place, and the same kind of argument was, by this time, being heard in the Soviet Union itself. Czechoslovakia thus found itself at the centre of a more profound and dangerous crisis. For, had the Czechs succeeded, they would have challenged the whole direction of Soviet development since Lenin. Moscow came to the conclusion that, once again, events in Eastern and Central Europe were threatening the cohesion of the entire Soviet political and military system. The Red Army invaded Czechoslovakia. Dubcek and the members of his Prague government were arrested and taken to Moscow where, under duress, they capitulated. Mr Brezhnev is recorded as saying mockingly to Alexander Dubcek, as he stood before him in weakness and in tears, "Sasha, Sasha, what are you doing in chains? . . ."

EDOUARD GOLDSTÜCKER: "In 1968 our [Czechoslovak] society was obviously developing into some sort of pluralism, but not necessarily a pluralism modelled on the Western democracies, with several political parties competing for power. My expression at that time was that we wanted to bring about an 'enlightened socialism.' That was my expression all the time, 'enlightened socialism.' (It led to one of our leading caricaturists publishing a cartoon with socialism personified, surrounded by lamps of various forms.)

My ideas at the beginning of 1968 were optimistic about the future of Czech democracy. I should like to quote to you two sentences of an article I wrote in February 1963, introducing the public discussion of Franz Kafka. It starts from ideas formulated by

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Jean-Paul Sartre at the Peace Conference in Moscow in July 1962, that it is necessary to 'demilitarise culture.' He quoted Kafka as an example, and I said:

> 'But before this can happen we must fulfil one very important condition—to see to it that even the weirdest imagination could not apply any of Kafka's visions of bureaucratic chicaneries and cruelties to our public affairs. If the history of our time has proved anything beyond a shadow of a doubt it is that it was fatally wrong to believe that a new and higher social order could be created without benefit of humanity and justice, and that great human achievements in any field could be indefinitely and loudly advocated in theory while being trampled upon in fact.' "

—Do you still believe that socialism can create the chance of society "at a higher level", as you were telling those students in Prague in 1968?

GOLDSTÜCKER: "Oh yes, oh yes, certainly. But a 'higher level' for me means not copying the pre-1938 system but taking into consideration the changes which our society went through in the meantime."

—But where is this rainbow which arcs across the sky for you? It always seems to be receding. Haven't all the events in Czechoslovakia disproved your hopes?

GOLDSTÜCKER: "Oh, they have certainly got worse; of course they got worse after the occupation. Czechoslovakia has been deliberately reduced to the level of a colony."

—Then let me ask you what seems to me to be the fundamental question: Can a Marxist-Leninist Communist Party be democratised?

GOLDSTÜCKER: "Look, Marxism-Leninism for me —it is absolutely clear—came to reveal its true substance as the ideology of Moscow, of the Moscow leadership. 'Marxism-Leninism', even in the combination of words, is a creation by Stalin. It means approving everything the Moscow leadership does. No matter how sincere a Socialist, if you do not follow to the last letter, to the last whim, what *they* call 'Marxism-Leninism', you are, in their eyes, an enemy. Marxism-Leninism is just an ideological cloak to conceal Moscow's domination."

—After all your experiences, why is it that you think it necessary only to adapt the thing and not to reconsider your whole belief, as so many others did?

GOLDSTÜCKER: "For the simple reason that I did not accept that the horror of Stalinism was the convincing, final argument that what the Soviet Revolution originally stood for was impossible. I said that there were other possibilities; we must follow them up, explore them and try to bring them to fruition."

—Is that still your position?

GOLDSTÜCKER: "No, no, of course not. After 1968, and after Poland, there is no productive force to be derived from the Soviet system any longer. It is finished, and sooner or later it has to be destroyed.

—"Destroyed" is an unparliamentary word. How is it to be destroyed?

GOLDSTÜCKER: "Either that system will still find some sort of path indicated by the democratisation efforts of Hungary in 1956, of Czechoslovakia in 1968 or in Poland now, or it will have to be destroyed in a terrible explosion. Destruction in the sense of old Karl Marx. Marx said that 'the bourgeois state has to be destroyed' and replaced by another. So 'destruction'—and destruction with an explosion.

None of them will say, 'All right, we will stop being Hungarians, and Poles, and Romanians, and we will merge into the Soviet Empire.' And that gives all the prerequisites for a struggle in the future —in the not very far-off future—against that Empire. That struggle might take various forms up to the ultimate, an armed struggle eventually. Of course an explosion destroying empires is a terribly dangerous thing for the whole of mankind.

And there is the attitude of the West now. There is a tendency to derive from this situation the lesson that the best thing is to try and influence things in such a way that nothing untoward happens to the Soviet Empire. As Helmut Sonnenfeldt formulated it, that the peoples of Eastern Europe find a natural relationship to Moscow. That means that they submit. We call it the '*Brezh-feldt* doctrine'!

It is impossible. It is impossible. The rulers of the Soviet Empire—I will be cynical—are guided by a quotation from Lenin, who said that the capitalists would sell for money even their own mother. That is the guiding principle of Soviet policy towards the West."

REALITIES HAVE CAST a dark shadow over the Communist experience in Eastern Europe. The time when its believers still could accept an ideology which daily experience contradicted has clearly passed. Edouard Goldstücker's prediction of an "explosive crisis" would seem to lend support to Leszek Kolakowski's contention that wherever communism is in power, the ruling class transforms it into an ideology whose real sources are Nationalism, Racism, or Imperialism. In this way,

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it creates its own gravediggers. What, then, is still "living", for Kolakowski, in Communist ideology as an idea, and a utopian scheme for a man-determined future?

KOLAKOWSKI: "It is in an obvious state of decline all over the world. As an intellectual instrument it is completely worthless. It explains nothing. But we can make a distinction between Leninism as a political doctrine—and as a tradition of Marxism—and 'Socialism' on the other hand which was much more differentiated.

I do not believe that Marxism, meaning the theoretical work of Marx, is now able to provide us with clues to historical explanations, let alone give us a recipe for the glorious future. Nevertheless I would not say Marx is, so to say, a 'dead body.' I think that Marx belongs to the heritage of European culture, that he had some important and interesting insights which proved to be of value, that some of his ideas were assimilated in our character but in such a way that one does not have to be a Marxist in order to accept them.

But Marxism as a system, with its all-embracing pretensions, is really completely dead. Marxism as a body of thought which deals with various historical subjects is still interesting but it has very little to do with Marxism as a political force operating today."

—If, as an explanatory system, it is finished, how do you explain that it continues to be effective, in the sense that it is employed as a rationale by a Superpower in the hands of a small élite who constantly make use of it? If it is so weak, why is it so strong?

KOLAKOWSKI: "Yes, that is the question. But, you see, I think that Marxism was transformed in such a way that it has become a sort of convenient jargon in which all kinds of claims and grievances can be expressed, many of them of a kind which have absolutely nothing to do with those Marx identified. Just imagine Marx, with his strongly 'Eurocentric' orientation, with his total contempt for all non-European cultures, with his belief that colonisation processes were 'historically progressive', just imagine him when he hears about 'Islamic Marxists'! It has become really an idiom in which you can express any sort of claim. The use of Marxist idiom in the Third World is really of no great importance; if it is replaced by another idiom, nothing in particular would change.

One other thing. Marxism as an ideology of the Soviet Empire proved to be efficient as a self-justifying, legitimising instrument of the Soviet Empire, and it is still used for this purpose. It in fact is necessary. Even so, hardly anybody takes it seriously any more in Socialist countries. There the general attitude is that real belief in Marxism-Leninism is good for West European adolescents but it is not really taken seriously. It is necessary because they have no other legitimacy—neither from democratic elections nor from the traditional inheritance of monarchical charisma. Ideology is their only form of legitimacy and power. Therefore they are compelled to stick to it, even though neither the rulers nor the ruled believe in it.

But—and here is a question which I am not able to answer—if its only legitimacy is its ideology, how long can the power system survive in conditions where this ideology is no longer believed? I do not know."

—Well, that is exactly what I was going to ask you. Surely it is a question of very great importance for us all.

KOLAKOWSKI: "Yes. I wish I knew. But you can notice how, over the years, even this official ideology has changed. Of course, the wooden formulae of Marxism-Leninism are still repeated as an official doctrine, taught in the universities or repeated in textbooks. But whenever the government is trying to have a minimal contact with the population, the ideological slogans and ideas employed are not 'Marxism-Leninism' any more. It is a syncretic mixture. Some Marxist phrases are mixed with imperialist ideas—the glory of Empire, xenophobic, racist and nationalist ideas. What the Germans call *'eklektischer Bettler-suppe'* [a mixed 'beggars broth']. It is incoherent, not codified, in many ways using only vague hints and allusions for things which cannot be spoken. This is *real* ideology. It is a far cry from Stalin's time when everything was so neatly arranged, codified, enumerated, so that you could learn the entire ideology in the proper order. Now, nobody knows exactly what this ideology is. This is one of the symptoms of its decline."

—In some of your recent writings you put a point which, you say, is not sufficiently appreciated in the West.

"Mendacity is not an accidental blemish on the body of communism. It is the absolute condition of its health and its life."

How important is that belief in your critique of communism? Is it at the core of its failure?

KOLAKOWSKI: "I would say so. Yes. Mendacity is the immortal soul of communism. They cannot get rid of it. The gap between the reality and the façade is so enormous that the lie has become a normal and natural way of life."

—But why is that a necessary and permanent condition of Communist societies?

KOLAKOWSKI: "Because communism lives on inevitably impossible promises. Because its legitimacy is based upon expectations which necessarily will not be fulfilled. Because its inherited ideology

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cannot be dismissed, and at the same time is in glaring contradiction to reality. So, in order to keep this legitimacy principle alive, they have to keep the mendacious façade without which they would fall apart. It is perhaps the most oppressive part of life under communism. Not terror, not exploitation, but the all-pervading lie, felt by everybody, known to everybody. It is something which makes life intolerable for people under communism. You could see it in the events which shook Poland in these last years. How important it was—this feeling of people that they eventually can get rid of the lie—in the movement of *Solidarity*!"

—You leave us with a view of communism in Eastern Europe increasingly imprisoned in absurdities and with an official ideology neither able to interpret the world nor to change it.

Do you see in this general collapse of the Communist faith anything more than what you have called "the great fantasy of our time" ending in the same way as all such attempts, individual or collective?

KOLAKOWSKI: "I do not expect any resurrections of the Marxist movement either within the Soviet Empire or in the West. I think that whole system of ideas is collapsing. It does not mean that the entire Soviet Union is about to collapse, but I strongly believe that it is internally corroded by so many disintegrating factors that I do believe that Sovietism and the Soviet Empire are *going* to collapse. If you ask me when, I can only say I wish I knew! Communism has been largely exposed as what it has always been—naked force. Polish events were in this respect very revealing. Communist power felt compelled to appear as what it was—the gun."

AUTHORS

Francis King's latest novel, *Act of Darkness*, will be published in September by Hutchinson. His story in this issue of ENCOUNTER is to appear in *London Tales* (edited by Julian Evans and published by Hamish Hamilton in October)—a collection of stories by eighteen writers inspired by their own locality of this various city.

Michael Charlton, one of Britain's leading broadcasters, is a veteran foreign correspondent for the BBC, and co-author of *Many Reasons Why*, a documentary inquiry into the Viet Nam War (Scolar Press, 1978). His article in this issue is a greatly expanded version of the third part of *The Eagle and the Small Birds*, a documentary series (produced by David Morton) which he wrote and presented on BBC Radio 4 earlier this year. In 1981 (August, September, October) ENCOUNTER published the three parts of his "How (& Why) Britain Lost the Leadership of Europe", which is to appear in book form under the title *The Price of Victory* (BBC Publications).

John Wain, poet, literary critic, playwright and novelist, was Oxford Professor of Poetry from 1973-78. His latest books include a new novel, *Young Shoulders* (winner of the 1982 Whitbread Award), his *Collected Poems, 1949-79*, and a new edition of his biography of Samuel Johnson. He is working on a series of memoirs, to be called *Dear Shadows*.

Hyam Maccoby's most recent contribution to ENCOUNTER was a long critique of George Steiner's "Hitler play", *The Portage to San Cristobal of A.H.* (May 1982). Among his books are *The Sacred Executioner* (Thames and Hudson, 1982), *Judaism on Trial*, a scholarly study of Jewish-Christian Disputations in the Middle Ages (Fairleigh Dickinson, 1982), and *Revolution in Judaea* (1973).

Brian Inglis, editor of *The Spectator* from 1959-62, is the author of many books, including *The Natural and Supernatural History of the Paranormal* (1978), *Natural Medicine* (1979), and *The Disease of Civilization* (1980). He contributed an article on *Biofeedback* (ENCOUNTER, November 1979) to Arthur Koestler's *Antennae* series.

Laurence Lerner is Professor of English at the University of Sussex. His most recent book of poems is *A.R.T.H.U.R. and M.A.R.T.H.A.: Or, the Loves of the Computers* (Secker, 1980).

Edward Pearce is a leader writer and Parliamentary sketch writer on the *Daily Telegraph*. *The Senate of Lilliput*, recently published by Faber, contains his lively sketches of House of Commons personalities.

Douglas Dunn's most recent volume of poems is *St Kilda's Parliament* (Faber, 1981). His anthology of new poets from Hull, *A Rumoured City*, was brought out last year by Bloodaxe Books, who also published his new long poem, *Europa's Lover*.

Hilary Spurling is a biographer and critic. *Ivy When Young*, the first volume of her Life of Ivy Compton-Burnett, will be reissued in paperback this autumn by Allison & Busby; the second volume, *Secret of a Woman's Heart*, is to be published next year by Hodder & Stoughton.

Alan Brownjohn's volumes of poems include *A Night in the Gazebo* (1980) and his *Collected Poems 1952-83* which will be published this autumn by Secker & Warburg.

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Raymond Tong

New Year Letter: AD 2000

Of course it should have been evident
from the day when Luigi Villa, the backgammon
champion of the world, was soundly defeated by
a computer programme.
While experts agreed
the game had been played "with great accuracy
and imagination", perhaps we were deceived
by the programme's uninspiring name,
apparently no more than a reference number
and suggesting a purely mathematical nature.
Perhaps we instinctively turned away,
seeking to avoid the painful implications,
preferring to find no serious problem
for the future in artificial imagination
linked to obvious personality
and contrived intelligence exercising
subtle human judgment.

Although our lives have been utterly changed
we are still confronted with the consequences
of continued evasion and failure to evolve
an adequate policy.
At the beginning
this was due to our need to placate
the growing legions of the unemployed.
Whatever the cost we had to obscure
the reality of their situation.
Today as we enter the Third Millennium,
with the aid of cybernetic imagination
and intelligence operating invariably
at the highest level of genius,
our Intermediate Solution has succeeded
and unemployment has been stabilised.
Assisted by infallible judgment and timing
the Surplus Crisis has likewise been surmounted,
firmly assuring the material well-being
of all our citizens.
It is too late
now to pass a law regulating
our relationship with the robots,
clearly defining the limits of their functions.
Most people, living their lives
largely in terms of pleasurable indulgence,
would consider it unnecessary,
even perhaps a little ungrateful.
In any case, having been deluged
with ever-increasing torrents of information,
swamped by unending technical knowledge,
integrity and vision have been dulled
and we are losing all sense of struggle.
Any expression of determination
or courage is invariably robotic.
It is therefore doubtful if we could reach
the necessary decision even to consider
the possibility of such a law.

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Laurence Lerner

The Grapes

In winter in this northern street I found
Dark grapes upon a stall, touched by the sun
And faintly purple. I put down my money,
I took them home, I tore the pimpled stalks,
I touched the blue-black spheres, tearing the bloom.
A bundled chain of molecules, a pile
Of giant caviare, of cannon-balls,
Each a dark globule of accomplishment,
Each fed by last year's sap
until they were
A bunch held up against a brighter sun
By an all-loving, all-possessing mother,
Offering their tinted flesh, their quivering taste,
Firm as a promise, to the eager child.

I sit on a warm beach, its ragged waves
Teasing my feet; I dip a grape in water
And lick the salt—and the damp sand comes up
To fill my mouth, to cram, to tear the breath
Out of my throat; I hear a frothy laugh
Bubble and fade, and footsteps—

Feeling the chill, I stroke the pallid sun
Upon my arm. I rearrange my grapes
Upon the table, year by year. The street
Can burst into a long cascade of grapes,
Can foam and overflow, and I could buy
As many grapes as memory can use

But still the child who chews and spits the skin,
Wipes off the sand, lies in the amber sun,
Is not on sale, has never seen this street
This sun this hemisphere—

I did not mean to use them up so quickly.
As year by year and grape by grape I see
The small stock disappear,
I did not mean

As the sun fades and far within myself
I hear a silent voice, "These are for you"

I did not mean at all.

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TO HAND: a letter from a friend at Berkeley, California, where he's a Professor and a Dean. "The only way I can avoid the daily incursions of telephone, missive, and distraught department heads, I find, is to get right out of it. Especially since we're going back to semesters this autumn, and have to begin the new term in the last week of August, scarce breathing-time allowed."

Well, we all know that Berkeley is a giant *Studentfabrik*, and that Administration, the dread invention of modern times, has all but engulfed the lives of academics. But what a contrast with the slippered ease of the universities depicted by Edward Gibbon!

> "I spent fourteen months at Magdalen College; they proved the fourteen months the most idle and unprofitable of my whole life. . . . The schools of Oxford and Cambridge were founded in a dark age of false and barbarous science; and they are still tainted with the vices of their origin. . . . Their work is more costly and less productive than that of independent artists. . . . Dr Adam Smith assigns as the cause of their indolence, that, instead of being paid by voluntary contributions, which would urge them to increase the number, and to deserve the gratitude of their pupils, the Oxford professors are secure in the enjoyment of a fixed stipend, without the necessity of labour, or the apprehension of control. . . .
>
> If I inquire into the manufactures of the monks of Magdalen, if I extend the inquiry to the other colleges of Oxford and Cambridge, a silent blush, or a scornful frown, will be the only reply. The fellows or monks of my time were decent easy men, who supinely enjoyed the gifts of the founder; their days were filled by a series of uniform employments; the chapel and the hall, the coffee-house and the common-room, till they retired, weary and well satisfied, to a long slumber. From the toil of reading, or thinking, or writing, they had absolved their conscience; and the first shoots of learning and ingenuity withered on the ground, without yielding any fruits to the owners or the public."

I'll spare you Gibbon's account of the dons' conversation, their politics, and their drink—partly because the stereotype is so familiar. *Brideshead Revisted* and Tom Sharpe's *Porterhouse Blue* have helped perpetuate a half-admiring, half-horrified vision of elegant, bibulous idleness—an impression reinforced each time there's a reunion dinner or feast. Greying ex-undergraduates gather in black tie at long tables under the hammer-beam roof, with all the college silver displayed, and the cellarer's second-finest wines. The Latin grace is followed by toasts and speeches: it might be the ritual meeting of a medieval guild, thanking God for a good harvest, brisk trade, and gifts or legacies from laymen, bludgeoned by piety into generosity. When the hallowed roistering's over, the guests repair to their old rooms in college, disfigured now by traces of other occupants, but still faintly evoking the ghosts of youth. In retrospect, it all looks idler and more decadent than it probably was.

In my time at Cambridge there was one gentle don who as a young man had shown great promise. He had published, to much acclaim, the first parts of an ambitious work. Given life tenure, he never finished it. He clipped the roses outside his window; he gave select tea-parties; he read; he pottered; he mused. Once, he lectured. No one could have called him bibulous: but perfectionism and fear of failure kept him fatally idle. Lewis Carroll, I fancy, may have resembled him. As a don, was Charles Lutwidge Dodgson much of an ornament to Christ Church? *Alice* made him an ornament to the world.

It's hard to imagine Dodgson, or his Cambridge counterpart, surviving long in Berkeley, or in the climate of Malcolm Bradbury's *The History Man*. Cloisters and ivory towers are out. Instead, we have student factories. Dons are no longer dons, but instructors, research workers, administrators, deans. Piety and the fear of God no longer pay their wages: most of the tab is picked up by the State. Dr Adam Smith's ideas have not been adopted completely. So far as I know, professors aren't yet rewarded on the basis of box-office receipts—though why not? But the atmosphere's changed since 1752, when Gibbon went to Oxford; and few, I imagine, regret the disappearance of his pedagogues' "dull and deep potations." Alertness is surely better than slumber. Or am I wrong?

READING SOME PRESENT-DAY academic publications, I sometimes suspect that I am. Try this.

> "They have long since received the full hermeneutic treatment. . . . We need to go a little into the mental space of diaries at large. . . . When the congruence partly breaks down. . . . To make life diurnal. . . . And the gold pencil fetishises his passion for the written word. . . . He is the master of a form which denies the teleology of outward progress. . . . What would be battology in any other place becomes a con-

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> firmation of the ongoing pattern. . . . So the formulaic turns . . . serve more than a temporal function: they also calibrate the story. . . . The modern expression . . . derives from a whole history of semantic frequentation. . . . The modern 'date' is an engagement made binding by its proleptic fixity in time. . . . He describes a major branching in narratological styles. . . . One of the reasons that epistolatory fiction went out of the window. . . . The long narrative forms . . . tended to prefer techniques of simultaneous rather than successive action: of the synchronic against the diachronic . . . When you get beyond their propositional status. . . . The illocutionary act takes place in a wholly reflexive context."

The subject of all that? Samuel Pepys's *Diary*. The source? *The London Review of Books*, 16 June–6 July 1983. The author? Pat Rogers, Professor of *English*, no less, at the University of Bristol. All the quotations come from the first half of a two-page review. In the second half, the prose became more accessible—perhaps a deadline spurred it along.

Nor am I simply picking on Professor Rogers. The very next issue of the same magazine carried a long piece by Christopher Norris, Lecturer in English (again) at the University of Wales Institute of Science and Technology; and much of that, too, had the air of imperfect translation from some other tongue. The word "hermeneutic" occurred seven times. Other tell-tale expressions included "a practical, transformative involvement in cultural politics . . . that scientistic dream . . . a more urgent toning . . . its emancipatory character . . . its structured genealogy . . . strategic interventions . . . a whole institutional network of coded authority . . . an endless, ungrounded play of textual significations . . . an intensely self-occupied or 'autotelic' activity . . . genuinely lived (or 'situated') experience . . . figments of textual contriving, interpretable only in so far as they occupy a certain 'semantic space' of representation", and "the production of meaning by interpreters working either squarely within or on the ambiguous margins of this privileged hermeneutic space."

By now you deserve a breather. The *LRB*, as its friends and subscribers call *The London Review of Books*, has the angriest correspondence columns I've ever read. The venom flows fastest in debates about—guess what—English. Battles rage between hot Leftists, challenging the Eliot-Leavis lament for a lost "organic society", and "deconstructionists", allegedly severing the text from its political setting. Aesthetes belabour doctrinaire semiologists; radicals vilify traditionalists; Marxists quarrel among themselves. Philip Guedalla once reminded us that "Vice is a subject of especial interest to historians, who are in most cases residents in small country towns." It may be that fortnightly invective is all that enlivens somnolent afternoons in the faculty library. But there's something else going on in these jargon-packed articles and personal polemics. What it is may take us back to Adam Smith's box-office criterion for lecturers' salaries and Edward Gibbon's view of Academe as a monopoly defending its own.

One feature of the English-school English from which I've been quoting is its would-be jauntiness. Around the professional phrases frisks a prose as rich in slang, contractions, and far-out metaphors as anything you've read in an Encounter column. And what does it spring from? You've got it: a seminar with the brightest in the class. One Levi-clad shin across the other knee, the studded ranch boot dangling, our groovy professor calls for order. "If you guys just like to settle down, we'll go on with our demystificationary reading of good old Althusser. . . ." The tone's demotic, even demagogic: but the jargon slams in on cue like station identification or a commercial break. This is the way to please Adam Smith and recruit disciples—a judicious if unplanned mixture of the populist and the arcane.

And the jargon, of course, serves a second purpose. Laymen, or layabout relics of humanist English teaching, may claim that all of it could be translated into simpler, plainer language. Pat Rogers appears to prove the point by dropping the jargon halfway through. Christopher Norris, by putting his odder specimens into quotation marks, seems to imply that he agrees. Thomas Henry Huxley urged writers: "Be clear, though you may be convicted of error. . . . Veracity is the heart of morality." But it's as little use to quote that against jargon as it would be to quote Laurence Sterne against the *LRB*'s correspondents: "Heat is in proportion to want of true knowledge." *Authorities* are merely spokesmen of their unconscious ideology, in this case an urbane bourgeois discourse, as if on 'Change or in the law-courts, lacking the passionate, transformative involvement in politics that makes words weapons in the class war.

But enough of persiflage (better known as Sir Percy Flage, roaring queen of Restoration comedy). The users of jargon are doing several things at once—as well as teasing their students' curiosity. In the first place, they're flashing their credentials, suggesting (if not actually proving) that they've read Barthes and Derrida and Terry Eagleton and *tutti quanti*, and (of course) that they've understood them. The sacred phrases are like bank cards in a cheque transaction, an obliga-

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tory formality whose usefulness outweighs its nuisance value.

So far so good: but the second function of jargon is more sinister. Here, it's less a cheque guarantee card than a symbol of exclusiveness, proving that its owner belongs to the Winers' and Diners' club. When the common reader encounters a flagship word like "hermeneutic" snapping in the breeze of an article cheerily entitled "From Plato to Nato", he or she is inclined to steer clear. Of course, there's always the invaluable *Dictionary of Modern Thought*, initiated by Alan Bullock for just such questing dullards; but with the likes of Rogers and Norris in charge, one's thumbing through the crib at every third line. Discouraged and baffled, the reader begins to question how seriously the pedagogic users of such jargon really intend to enlighten the masses, if at all. Emancipatory it isn't. Obfuscatory it is.

Why then the vogue for this high-tech use of language by people whose initial impulse towards reading and writing must surely have been a love of words, stories, and images—literature, if you'll pardon the expression? Maybe, with some, it's intoxication, glee at their own ingenuity, cavorting on stage with Nureyev and never pulling a single muscle. That I can understand; parody may be the mother of invention. But I suspect, finally, that more than glee enters into the devil's equation: the real reason is the present nature of universities, and in particular of the faculties of arts.

WHEN FEAR OF God paid the university piper, the Church called the tune. Now that the State's the paymaster, the score's dictated by utility. "What we need", say the politicians, non-scientists almost to a man, "is more engineering and science graduates, to help get this country of ours back on its feet." Here and there, a few clerical voices call for it to get back on its knees; but their thin appeal is drowned by the claims of Mammon, job creation, economic growth, and ever higher tech. In such a worldly chorus, no wonder that the arts sound discordant. Prophets of unease, fomenters of protest, questioners of existing values, they're singing the wrong tune anyway; and in the midst of recession, they hardly dare sing at all. Chop, chop, chop, the axe falls on "peripheral" departments; and one defensive reflex is to go technological like the rest. "What do these chaps do all day, Under-Secretary? Read novels? Write reviews and criticism? Sounds like the life of Riley to me!" "Ah but, Minister, they're educating young people to respect civilised values: as Dr Leavis wrote. . . ." Alternatively: "Ah but, Minister, they're giving young people an insight into the paternalism underlying the old Poor Law. . . ." Or again: "Ah but, Minister, they're working at the forward frontiers of their subject, one jump ahead of even the best French and German experts. . . ."

I'm not suggesting that anyone in an English faculty has imagined such far-fetched conversational scenarios. What I do suggest is that the study of literature, like the study of society, has been "professionalised" along lines unconsciously akin to those of the natural sciences. Scientists have long bemused laymen by using words as what lawyers call "terms of art": they take an expression in common currency, redefine it more narrowly, use it for their precise purposes, and then—when we overhear it—puzzle us all. Psychologists are noted culprits, as arguments about "intelligence" amply prove. Sociologists run them a close second; and literary critics are rapidly edging up the field. In literature, the trick is not so much to hijack a word in common use as to invent, or mistranslate from French or German, a new expression to use instead of it. No academic literary critic worth his salt will ever "explain": he only "*explicates*." Nothing is ever "liberating", only "*emancipatory*"; all "communication" becomes "*discourse*"—and so on. It all smacks, to me, of Gibbon's "false and barbarous science." Whether it'll save anyone's bacon, or tenure, I'm inclined to wonder; but it certainly helps preserve the medieval guild's "mystery." For further examples and instalments, watch this privileged hermeneutic space.

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The Life & Death of Arthur Koestler

From Diagnosis to Nightmare

Koestler & Orwell on the Totalitarian Mind

By JOHN WAIN

THE DEATH OF Arthur Koestler, a moving event in itself, has a particular melancholy interest for English readers because it severs one of the last remaining links with George Orwell. Koestler and Orwell were, in the 1930s and '40s, on the barricades together. They both became acquainted with the mental world of Left-wing totalitarianism while engaged in combating the apparent opposite —right-wing totalitarianism. Koestler was thrown into prison and condemned to death in Spain by those same Fascists who shot and narrowly missed killing Orwell in the fighting-line. Ten years later they were both convinced that the shadow lying across the world was that of a totalitarianism modelled on, and directed by, the Soviet Communist Party.

In my early twenties it seemed more than likely that communism would shortly take over the world. Not only was the Red Army rolling westwards, snapping up country after country, not only had the vast land-mass of China moved under the same banner, but the intelligentsia of the liberal democracies, the very people who should have been the guardians of freedom and respect for the individual, appeared to have hazy and sentimental notions about what a Soviet take-over of Western Europe would actually be *like*. Two books in particular sought to clarify these notions: *Darkness at Noon* (written prophetically early, and published in 1940) and *1984* (published in 1949).

I don't, of course, say that the advance of communism was halted by two novels. Obviously there were little matters like the building-up of NATO and the economic recovery of Western Europe. But I know, because I remember it, that those two books did have a substantial impact. It is a mistake for a writer to see himself primarily as a propagandist, but it is also a mistake for a writer to imagine that his imaginative vision is sealed off in a capsule called "literature" and can never have any effect on the world. Those two novels are a good case in point.

This note sets out to do no more than indicate a few areas of comparison between *Darkness at Noon* and *1984*. Beneath their common purpose they are, of course, very different. Koestler and Orwell, though they were friends, were not very similar as men. It also has to be remembered that, though they were about the same age, one was full of vigour, just entering the prime of life, and the other already dying of an illness that exhausts the spirit as well as the body. This granted, it has to be said at once that Orwell's novel is a horror-fantasy, whereas Koestler's is an ice-cool, accurate appraisal of factors that existed then and exist now.

"EVERYBODY KNOWS", by this time, what *Darkness at Noon* is about. Rubashov, an Old Guard Bolshevik, one of the generation who made the Revolution, is arrested and accused of treachery to the people, being bribed by a foreign power, etc., etc. These charges are untrue and monstrously

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absurd, but he confesses to them in the end. The historical base of the novel is therefore immediately obvious. During the Show Trials that accompanied Stalin's purges, a number of men of just this type, faithful and dedicated servants of the Revolution, confessed to similar enormities. Why? To Communists, the answer was simple: they were guilty. To anti-Communists, it was equally simple: the confessions had been exacted by fear. But these were very tough and dedicated men. They were innocent of the charges, but they believed wholeheartedly in the power that accused them; they had given their lives to it. The threat of death would not be likely to move them, since they had jokingly faced death many times in the service of the Revolution. So how was it done?

THE WORD "futurology" had not been invented in those days, but *Darkness at Noon* is an example of it nevertheless. At the time he wrote the book, Koestler had, apart from his intuition, very little to go on. Even the basic fact—that the accused in the Show Trials were innocent—was not widely admitted. That had to wait till 1956, when Khrushchev made his speech to the 20th Party Congress and exposed Stalin's crimes. As to the method used, the psychological trap by which the accused were brought to confess, its nature was only revealed in bits and pieces, as memoirs and reported conversations came gradually to light. (The blow-by-blow account of all this is in the Appendix that Koestler added to the novel in its "Danube edition" in 1973.)

Rubashov confesses to crimes of which he is innocent because he is inexorably made to realise that this is where the logic of his life has led him. He was of the generation brought up before what Koestler calls "the flood", when creation started again on a bare earth, and the first thing he had to do was to get rid of his ingrained traditional morality and swallow the doctrine that the end justifies the means. Good is what serves the Party. Evil is what hinders the Party. And so on through Truth and Lies, Cruelty and Mercy, Treachery or Fidelity. It serves the Party to have scapegoats. The people are discontented. It is not impossible that they may rise in a revolt that would cause endless suffering. If people whom they have been accustomed to admire, even to venerate, confess to being in the pay of Imperialist powers, that will prove that the arrests, the denunciations, the labour camps, are all necessary and must be submitted to. So that Rubashov's consent to this, his putting his name to a trumped-up confession, is simply one more service he can do the Party.

Rubashov takes some time to reach this conclusion, or there would be no novel. Three-quarters of the way through the book he is still showing signs of his bourgeois upbringing when he says to his interrogator Gletkin,

> " '. . . it would be more in accordance with our ideas to tell the people the truth, instead of populating the world with *saboteurs* and devils.'
>
> 'If one told the people in my village', said Gletkin, 'that they were still slow and backward in spite of the Revolution and the factories, it would have no effect on them. If one tells them that they are heroes of work, more efficient than the Americans, and that all evil only comes from devils and *saboteurs*, it has at least *some* effect. Truth is what is useful to humanity, falsehood what is harmful.' "

DARKNESS AT NOON is not concerned, except by implication, with the fate of the man in the street. It is an imaginative reconstruction of the mental world of "a historically significant minority", as Koestler calls them in the "Danube" Postscript:

> ". . . the élite of the Old Bolsheviks, the men who made the Russian Revolution, changed the destiny of the world, then sank into the mud of utter self-debasement."

Koestler's motive in writing the novel was partly to see justice done—justice to the memory of "fallen giants", who had been brought to self-accusation not by coercion but by the working, in however grotesque a fashion, of man's noblest instinct, the instinct for duty and sacrifice. The whole ghastly mockery of justice came to seem to them as their own version of "greater love hath no man."

Koestler's other motive was to issue a warning to politicians and opinion-moulders in the liberal democracies as to the nature of their opponents—to reveal "the magic power of totalitarian ideologies." This object was not achieved. Centuries of *laissez-faire* liberalism had left most Western Europeans, and virtually all Englishmen, incapable of understanding the totalitarian mind. To them, the book seemed "far-fetched." Its first English edition, in its first year, sold only four thousand copies. Nobody wanted to know.

This is where Orwell comes in. Of the two novels, his is far the more successful as propaganda. Words like *Newspeak* and *Doublethink*, phrases like BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU, passed at once into the language. They have passed Orwell's own test of true fame—that of achieving currency among millions who do not know the name of their author. Orwell was impressed by the way Dickens had so captivated the popular imagination that "there must be copies of one or two of his works lying about in an actual majority of English homes." Since we have entered the age of the telescreen, that will never happen to *1984* as a book. But catch-phrases from it, and the use of the date itself as a code-name for a tyrannical society, must have been

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heard in an actual majority. He has passed the Dickens test.

Probably it took something as relatively crude as *1984* to break the barrier of Anglo-Saxon incomprehension about the totalitarian mind. (Not, of course, that the barrier has ever been pulled down and carted away. The "Peace Movement", for example, is based, exactly like its ancestor the Peace Pledge Union, on the unshakable belief that "it can't happen here.") Orwell did at least succeed in making a breach in the barrier through which a few of the sheep could wander. The price he paid for this was drastic simplification and a cartoon method.

1984 is horrifying: it plays on the nerves. But its effect wears off because, ultimately, the mind can come to the rescue of the nerves by pointing out that the picture we are being shown is not credible. It may not have been possible in 1948, but it is certainly possible now, with the hindsight of the last quarter-century, to see that no high-technology society could develop into anything resembling Airstrip One.

A RECENT ISSUE OF *The Village Voice*, in New York, devoted much space to discussing *1984* from various angles. Among its other contributors, Nat Hentoff had an article on the surveillance methods currently available to the authorities. With a kind of anguished glee, Mr Hentoff ran through the various technical devices that the police, the FBI, and "government" generally, have at their disposal. His theme was, more or less, that as far as America is concerned Orwell's 1984 is already here.

Certainly the technical devices imagined by Orwell are already not merely invented but tested and installed. Many of them are available on the open market, not just to "them" but, if we can afford it, to "us" as well. There are, for instance, various devices that will look after your home while you are away, emitting an alarm call in case of fire. (The apparatus can not only perceive flame, it can smell smoke.) And, of course, "they" can use the same device to check whether you are at home or not.

In the few days since I read this article, I have heard about a good one that Mr Hentoff missed. The civil authorities in Albuquerque, New Mexico, have taken to fitting offenders with an electronic ankle-bracelet. It is waterproof (so you can have a bath), and light, and inconspicuous; and it has things in it that bleep in some kind of cooperation with your telephone, so that the local police station can tell whether you are in or out. With its aid, a whole range of people who, without actually being criminals, have done something that deserves some punishment (drunk drivers, petty but persistent shoplifters, etc., etc.) can be ordered to observe a curfew, to go straight home after work and stay there.

Obviously, as long as it stops there, such a gadget is useful to the community. People who have been anti-social need not be put into the overloaded prisons, need not have heavy fines slapped on them which might make it harder for them to support their families, have in fact to stay at home and look after these same families. Mr Hentoff would no doubt take it as one more example of what *They* are doing to *Us*. His attitude in general is that the individual citizen, always and everywhere, is a victim or potential victim of the state. But it seems to me not absurd to ask the question: What state? If I were a citizen of Albuquerque and knew that, as a result of this method of surveillance, the police and the probation services were saved a lot of routine work with petty offenders, wouldn't it give them more time to do their more serious work? Mr Hentoff might well retort that he feels distaste at the thought of a police force, and a machinery of civil coercion in general, with plenty of time on its hands. And this is an honourable Greenwich Village tradition, which I would not wish to mock at. But one must at least try to look at a question from several sides.

A HIGH-TECHNOLOGY SOCIETY needs technocrats. So far, so good. Orwell foresees this difficulty and limits his high technology to a very small area. The proles, for instance, live at a low technological level. It is their masters, the Party, who are under constant surveillance, with a two-way television screen in every living-space. Orwell recognised from the start, and remarks here and there throughout his writings, that scientists and engineers, because they deal with objective reality, have to retain some rationality. They can't afford to have it brainwashed out of them as the political workers and the literary critics and the history-smudgers can. So he knows, and allows for, the fact that the engineers who devise all this information technology will have to have rational minds. But since there will be so few of them, their effect on the mass society will be negligible. The technocrats can be clear-minded while the rest of the population shambles around repeating *"War is Peace", "Freedom is Slavery", "Ignorance is Strength."*

Here we come to inconvenient fact Number One. A society with that amount of information technology would need not only a few brilliant engineers to devise it and an élite corps of technicians to install it, but also a host of trained people to service all this stuff. The Thought Police watching Winston Smith every moment of his life would need equipment that *worked*. And this, by itself, presupposes a society relatively free from the ever-

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present suspicion of sabotage. In a land where everyone is afraid that the next person is looking over his shoulder, nothing works because nobody is willing to make decisions. The middle range of trained workers, the people who wouldn't have the genius to invent these gadgets but are quite intelligent enough to understand how they work, are always hamstrung by an all-seeing and paranoid bureaucracy. Something breaks down; the repair team arrives; no one wants to make a decision, and the matter is shrugged off from one to another with mumblings about "the spare parts aren't available at present", etc., etc.

No one will think this an exaggeration who has travelled, as I have, in the USSR. No doubt the weapon systems work all right, but hardly anything else does. It must be hell to try to get a repair job done on, say, the conveyor belt at a grain silo. And this sheds some light on the mystery of why the enormous Soviet Union, disposing of vast tracts of fertile land in the Ukraine and elsewhere, can't even feed itself. Even the weaponry, at any level below the ultimately lethal missiles, may be less efficient than its Western equivalent. Certainly in the 1982 Lebanese conflict, the Syrian aircraft (Soviet-equipped) made a very poor showing against the Israeli aircraft (American-equipped). For some 30 years, very nearly all high technological advance has been made in the democracies.

BACK NOW TO Airstrip One. Winston, being in the "thirty-to-forty age group", has to do his exercises in front of the telescreen, following the instructions barked by the boss-lady. He can see her and she can see him, because when he goes into a reverie and slackens off she immediately scolds him: "6079 Smith W.! Yes, you! . . . You're not trying." If we think for a moment of the technical infrastructure that this calls for, we see that only a

Koestler's Orwell

THE staunchest British Left-wing opponent of the Soviet régime during and immediately after the War was George Orwell. He stood out like a rock in the swamp of the fellow-travelling intelligentsia of varying degrees of muddiness. It was thus almost inevitable that we became first political allies, then friends, however different in character and background. The task of writing his obituary, which *The Observer* asked me to do (29 January 1950), was made even more painful by the shortness of the available space.

TO MEET *one's favourite author in the flesh is mostly a disillusioning experience. George Orwell was one of the few writers who looked and behaved exactly as the reader of his books expected him to look and behave. This exceptional concordance between the man and his work was a measure of the exceptional unity and integrity of his character.*

An English critic recently called him the most honest writer alive; his uncompromising intellectual honesty was such that it made him appear almost inhuman at times. There was an emanation of austere harshness around him which diminished only in proportion to distance, as it were: he was merciless towards himself, severe upon his friends, unresponsive to admirers, but full of understanding sympathy for those on the remote periphery, the

> **"crowds in the big towns with their knobby faces, their bad teeth and gentle manners, the queues outside the Labour Exchanges, the old maids biking to Holy Communion through the mists of the autumn morning. . . ."**

Thus, the greater the distance from intimacy and the wider the radius of the circle, the more warming became the radiations of this lonely man's great power of love. But he was incapable of self-love or self-pity. His ruthlessness towards himself was the key to his personality; it determined his attitude towards the enemy within, the disease which had raged in his chest since his adolescence.

HIS LIFE **was one consistent series of rebellions both against the conditions of society in general and his own particular predicament; against humanity's drift towards 1984 and his own drift towards the final breakdown. Intermittent haemorrhages marked like milestones the rebel's progress as a sergeant in the Burma police, a dishwasher in Paris, a tramp in England, a soldier in Spain. Each should have acted as a warning, and each served as a challenge, answered by works of increasing weight and stature.**

The last warning came three years ago. It became obvious that his life-span could only be prolonged by a sheltered existence under constant medical care. He chose to live instead on a lonely island in the Hebrides, with his adopted baby son, without even a charwoman to look after him.

Under these conditions he wrote his savage vision of 1984. Shortly after the book was completed he became bedridden, and never recovered. Yet had he followed the advice of doctors and friends, and lived in the self-indulgent atmosphere of a Swiss sanatorium, his masterpiece could not have been written—nor any of his former books. The greatness and tragedy of Orwell was his total rejection of compromise.

THE URGE OF GENIUS *and the promptings of common sense can rarely be reconciled; Orwell's life*

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very large and very devoted work-force could keep it up. And such a work-force, in Airstrip One, would not exist. The Thought Police, far from being all-powerful, would all be ulcer patients in a very short time from continual frustration. The very work that Winston Smith is represented as doing—rewriting history and falsifying it—would be continually running into technical snags. The messages would not arrive, owing to insufficient pressure in the pneumatic tubes; the memory holes would become clogged; the telescreens would first begin to distort everything out of recognition and then pack up altogether.

When Winston and Julia begin their affair, they take a trip into the countryside and Orwell represents them as having to whisper for fear of microphones that might be hidden anywhere. Imagine the number of specialists needed to sort out the voices of Winston and Julia from those of millions of other Party members; and even then, the information has to go to some higher level of the Thought Police who will decide whether the content of their conversation justifies arresting them. Add to this the army of people employed in perpetual monitoring of telescreens. Obviously no such system could work with anything like the smooth, ruthless efficiency that Orwell shudderingly describes.

Psychologically, too, *1984* is non-credible. It shows us a society that has abolished the carrot and left only the stick. But nobody, even under a terror, is motivated to work unless he can see the next upward step. Members of the Outer Party would have to nourish a realistic hope that they might one day proceed to the Inner Party. If there is no hope of this, then reasonably intelligent people like Winston Smith or Syme the philologist will simply shirk their tasks. Nor is it credible that the proles would resign themselves permanently to their status as battery-hens.

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was a victory of the former over the latter. For now that he is dead, the time has come to recognise that he was the only writer of genius among the littérateurs *of social revolt between the two wars. Cyril Connolly's remark, referring to their common prep-school days: "I was a stage rebel, Orwell a true one", is valid for his whole generation.*

When he went to fight in Spain he did not join the sham-fraternity of the International Brigades, but the most wretched of the Spanish Militia units, the heretics of the POUM. *He was the only one whom his grim integrity kept immune against the spurious mystique of the "Movement", who never became a fellow-traveller and never believed in Moses the Raven's Sugar-Candy Mountain—either in heaven or on earth. Consequently, his seven books of that period, from* **Down and Out** *to* **Coming up for Air**, *all remain fresh and bursting with life, and will remain so for decades to come, whereas most of the books produced by the "emotionally shallow Leftism" of that time, which Orwell so despised, are dead and dated today.*

A SIMILAR **comparison could be drawn for the period of the War. Among all the pamphlets, tracts and exhortations which the War produced, hardly anything bears re-reading today —except, perhaps, E. M. Forster's** *What I Believe*, **a few passages from Churchill's speeches, and, above all, Orwell's** *The Lion and the Unicorn*. **Its opening section, "England Your England", is one of the most moving and yet incisive portraits of the English character, and a minor classic in itself.**

Animal Farm **and** *1984* **are Orwell's last works. No parable was written since** *Gulliver's Travels* **equal in profundity and mordant satire to** *Animal Farm*, **no fantasy since Kafka's** *In the Penal Settlement* **equal in logical horror to** *1984*. **I believe that future historians of literature will regard Orwell as a kind of missing link between Kafka and Swift. For, to quote Connolly again, it may well be true that "it is closing time in the gardens of the West, and from now on an artist will be judged only by the resonance of his solitude or the quality of his despair. . . ."**

THE RESONANCE *of Orwell's solitude and the quality of his despair can only be compared to Kafka's—but with this difference: that Orwell's despair had a concrete, organised structure, as it were, and was projected from the individual to the social plane. And if* **four legs good, two legs bad**, *is pure Swift, there is again this difference: that Orwell never completely lost faith in the knobby-faced yahoos with their bad teeth. Had he proposed an epitaph for himself, my guess is that he would have chosen these lines from Old Major's revolutionary anthem, to be sung to a "stirring tune, something between 'Clementine' and 'La Cucaracha' ":*

Rings shall vanish from our noses,
And the harness from our back . . .

For that day we all must labour,
Though we die before it break;
Cows and horses, geese and turkeys,
All must toil for freedom's sake.

Somehow Orwell really believed in this. It was this quaint belief which guided the rebel's progress, and made him so very lovable though he did not know it.

Arthur Koestler

reprinted in BRICKS TO BABEL (1983)

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Opposition to the Party would probably develop along two lines. First, there would be guerrillas, "freedom fighters", among the proles, who would work by sabotage and murder. If a bomb destroyed half a street, the Party would never be certain whether it was a guerrilla outrage or a rocket sent over by Eastasia or Eurasia, the conveniently permanent enemies. Second, there would be a few big racketeers, successful black-market millionaires, who would fend off the Thought Police by bribery and corruption.

NO, *1984* WOULD NOT WORK. Orwell's novel shows us, convincingly enough, that the totalitarian mind *wills* the total extinction of freedom. But he shows that will at work on a scale that strains credulity, loses our realistic assent and ultimately becomes farcical. O'Brien is ultimately not a terrifying figure because we don't believe in him. The infrastructure that would be needed to support an O'Brien, the smooth efficiency of his methods, would not in fact develop. A high level of technology never goes with a complete tyranny: one or the other gives way.

But turn to Koestler. This one we do believe. The infrastructure that produced Gletkin, the philosophy that brought down Rubashov, existed in 1940 and exist today.

Jew

By Hyam Maccoby

ARTHUR KOESTLER was one of the bright stars of my youth. His brilliantly readable books, with their antithetical titles—*The Yogi and the Commissar, The Lotus and the Robot*—informed and stimulated me, making me aware of an intellectual adventurer who pressed continually in his mind towards the frontiers of knowledge, just as he always contrived, in his life, to be present where exciting, dangerous issues were being decided.

Yet the only time I ever met him, I quarrelled with him. This was over his attitudes towards the Jews and Judaism, which I found extraordinarily prejudiced, ill-informed, and even perverse. In this area, his usual standards of accuracy and logic seemed to desert him. I can only think that this was due to an unresolved conflict about his own Jewishness.

Koestler was born into an assimilated Hungarian family which asked nothing more than to be regarded as Hungarians. Anti-Semitism, however, forced the young Koestler to identify himself as a Jew, and he joined a Jewish Society at Vienna University. This particular Jewish group made a practice of fighting duels with anti-Semitic students. So Koestler's first self-identification as a Jew was of a piece with his later attachment to Jabotinsky (the leader of the Zionist Revisionist party); it was just as much a rejection of Jewish tradition as an assertion of Jewish identity. To Koestler, Jewish tradition was never more than an encrustation or deformity arising from Jewish sufferings and position of inferiority. To take their place in the comity of nations, the Jews must throw off these fetters, and emerge as a nation just like other nations. Zionism, in other words, was for Koestler a form of "assimilation", the only kind that might really work.

So when his personal experiment with Zionism failed (he lived in Palestine from 1926 to 1929), he arrived at the conclusion that it was his duty to become assimilated in another way. Two viable choices, he declared, lay before every Jew: either to go to Israel and become an Israeli citizen; or to cease to be a Jew altogether, and become fully integrated and assimilated in whatever country he inhabited. He carried this opinion to such lengths that he advised Jewish couples in England to bring up their children as members of the Church of England.

Koestler's book about Palestine (between 1917 and 1949), *Promise and Fulfilment*, has recently been re-issued (in paperback by Macmillan in a somewhat shortened form). As an account of the political issues, it reads as brilliantly as ever; but wherever Koestler touches on Jewish culture or religion, his peculiar prejudice is palpable. His account of Talmudic studies is as follows:

> "Through these 'interpretations' one generation after another learned the art of cheating the Lord and their own consciences. They were techniques that became a conditioned reflex, so that the first approach to a law or prohibition was how to 'interpret' it. . . . How far this mental corruption in matters divine was a product of social pressures that forced the Jew to live on the margin of the law, and how far the Talmudistic mentality reacted on his pattern of social behaviour, is a moot point. The outcome, at any rate was a vicious circle, a *perpetuum mobile* for generating anti-Semitism, which linked persecution and evasion in a monotonously alternating tidal rhythm."

Whether Koestler ever read even one page of the Talmud or its commentaries I rather doubt. If he had done so, he would have found that its "interpretations" are similar to those in every legal system. Old laws have to be applied to new situations; sometimes they have to be brought up-to-

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date in the light of amended and improved moral sensibilities. Would Koestler have preferred the Old Testament law about "an eye for an eye" to remain uninterpreted, rather than receive its Pharisaic and Talmudic interpretation in terms of monetary compensation for injuries? Did he think that the Roman law should have remained at the level of the Twelve Tables? The Talmud applies Biblical principles of justice to situations never envisaged by Biblical authors, and in doing this, shows a concern for social justice and human welfare in advance of its time. But development and interpretation that would have seemed perfectly rational and natural in any other legal system was regarded as sinister by anti-Talmudists such as August Rohling, and Koestler is simply repeating the strictures of such anti-Semitic charlatans at second or third hand.

KOESTLER COULD NOT allow any merit in the Talmudic legal system because to do so would have destroyed his picture of Diaspora Jewry as entirely without values or culture worth preserving. His ultra-Zionism (which slipped so easily into complete assimilationism) saw in Israel the only possible outlet for Jewish survival, since outside Israel

On the Short List

THERE IS *a saying in Eastern Europe that no man who has not been under sentence of death for political motives or spent time in a concentration camp has tasted the 20th century. Arthur Koestler was under sentence of death in Malaga, during the Spanish Civil War. He knew at first hand the other characteristic condition of our age: that of the refugee and exile, of the man who has had to switch homelands, passports, professions and languages in order to survive. But where so many of his hunted companions went under or numb, Koestler made of the savageries and ironies which surrounded his survivals an object of art and unsparing intelligence.*

'Darkness at Noon', **almost unnoticed when it first appeared in its English guise in 1940, became one of the key books of the century when it was published in French shortly after the end of the War. In it, Koestler had given an uncannily accurate intuitive account of the practices of mental torture used by the modern police state. But he had done more. He had identified the root paradox of utopian terror: the destruction and self-destruction of the idealist in the name of distant, even monstrous dreams of human liberation.**

Koestler lived to hear his own fictional words come back to him as history. At the Prague Trials, after 1968, defendants deliberately identified themselves and their tormentors with the characters in the book. They spoke Koestler's words as their own truths. Has any other modern novel known such homecoming?

KOESTLER **was one of the great Central European Jews in a time which saw the annihilation of the breed. Almost from boyhood, he was a survivor, with a survivor's resilience and scars. In a period of rancorous specialisation, Koestler was eagerly at home in literature and in politics, in fiction and in journalism, in the arts and in the sciences. He was a ready master of Hungarian, of German, of French, who chose to live and write in England. Like Conrad and Nabokov, he knew the cost and the privileges of extraterritoriality. He kept, all his later life, the characteristically alert and tentative gait of one who walks along frontiers.**

TO BE A *quintessential European, universalist, a polyglot and a man who literally breathed ideas, in post-war Britain was an awkward fate. But Koestler loved his elective homeland with a wry passion. Inevitably, he saw in its coincidence of political decay and artistic-intellectual prodigality a parallel to the Habsburg world of his past. London became Koestler's lost Vienna. If the powers that be kept from him the public honours and trappings of acceptance which Koestler, vulnerably, looked to, he nevertheless stood at the close as a focus of intensity, of necessary challenge in a mean season.*

WITH **Arthur Koestler gone (to borrow from Auden's tribute to Yeats), the temperature of felt life has dropped. But in their defiantly un-British garb, in the Danube Edition of the Collected Works, Koestler's books stand. There are among them primers of courage which are indispensable.**

SOME YEARS AGO, *at the Austrian alpine village of Alpbach, where he had an eyrie of a house, Koestler met with a cultural envoy from Budapest. "What would happen," he asked, "if I came back for a visit?"*

"We would welcome you with pride", answered the bureaucrat. "But we could not guarantee your safety. You are on a very short list of those whom the Soviet Union cannot come to terms with. **Darkness at Noon** *is as dangerous today as it was a generation ago. They might try and come for you. It is really a tiny list, but you are on it."*

Walking home, I said to Koestler that this list was undoubtedly shorter than that of OMs or Nobel Prize winners. And that it was the finest to be on in our time. He seemed pleased.

George Steiner
in the SUNDAY TIMES *(London)*

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(in his view) the Jews represented a cultural vacuum. Here is his assessment of the history of Jewish culture, in *Promise and Fulfilment:*

> "After the completion of the Talmud (c. A.D. 500) not even scholars wrote in Hebrew any longer; the language had become too fossilised to be of any use to medieval thought and philosophy. The Jewish scholars of the eleventh and twelfth centuries—Moses ben Maimon, Ibn Ezra, Ibn Gabirol—wrote in German, English and French. Probably the last works of any merit written in the ancient language are the poems of Judah Halevi (c. 1085–c. 1140); but Halevi, too, wrote his philosophical works in Arabic, as Hebrew had become totally unsuitable for the treatment of abstract subjects and for a precise expression of thought."

Anyone not acquainted with Jewish literature might well be forgiven for being impressed by the air of authority with which this passage is written; yet it is entirely wrong. Maimonides wrote mostly in Hebrew, and even his Arabic works had their chief influence in Hebrew translations. Ibn Ezra wrote exclusively in Hebrew. Ibn Gabirol's poetical output was entirely in Hebrew. Medieval Hebrew is a different language from Biblical or Talmudic Hebrew; contrary to Koestler's confident assertion (and his knowledge of Hebrew was almost nil), the language developed continually in order to cope with new philosophical ideas.

Also in *Promise and Fulfilment*, Koestler states:

> "Unlike other nations, Israel has no Cromwell and no Joan of Arc, no Voltaire, Goethe or Lincoln; its heroes are the Prophets, its only classic the Bible."

This shows almost complete ignorance of Jewish history and literature. Thinkers of the status of Maimonides and Crescas; heroic fighters like Judas Maccabaeus, Bar Kokhba, David Alroy or Samuel Hanagid; martyrs such as Akiva or Meir of Rothenburg; mystics such as Isaac the Blind or Isaac Luria, charismatic leaders such as the Baal Shem Tov or Nahman of Bratslav—all these did not exist for him because they do not feature in the works of Christian historians. On Judaism, Koestler has this to say:

> "To renounce the Jewish faith does not mean to jettison the perennial values of Judaic tradition. Its essential teachings have passed long ago into the mainstream of the Judaeo-Christian heritage."

That Judaism has stood out for its own values *against* Christianity (and its doctrines of Vicarious Atonement, Original Sin, and Predestination) never entered Koestler's head; such an idea did not form any part of the Enlightenment account of religious history, which despite its doctrinal scepticism did not question the orthodox Christian scheme of the supersession of Judaism by Christianity.

HOW, THEN, if the Jews had no distinctive ideas or culture, did they survive? Koestler's answer is very simple: it was through their racialist pride. This is the view assumed throughout Koestler's book *The Thirteenth Tribe* (1977), which is his chief contribution to the history of the Jews and Judaism. Here he gives an excellent account of the conversion of the Khazar Kingdom to Judaism and of the extraordinary flourishing and eventual downfall of this little-known Jewish Empire of the 8th to 10th centuries A.D. Koestler then goes on to espouse the highly debatable theory of Kutschera and Poliak that Polish Jewry (and thus most of modern Jewry) was mainly derived from the Khazars. However, the main point of Koestler's book appears in his triumphant contention that he has now solved the Jewish question; for he has refuted Jewish racialism, "the persistent myth of the Biblical tribe having preserved its racial purity throughout the ages." *If* the present-day Jews are derived from the Khazars, a Turkish tribe, then they are *not* the descendants of Abraham, and *must* abandon the racialist pride which alone has kept them in existence. Those Jews who have made their way to Israel (influenced by the "myth") should stay there; but those outside Israel should abandon Jewish identity as soon as possible, since its *raison d'être* has been removed.

Reviewing *The Thirteenth Tribe*, I wrote that it was a matter of indifference to me, as a Jew, whether present-day Jews were mainly descended from the Khazars, since the Jews had never claimed racial purity and set no store by it. I asked where, in the Jewish sources, was this alleged "myth of racial purity" (though it is easy enough to find in anti-Semitic sources). The evidence adduced by Koestler to show the mixed genetic character of the Jewish people, I pointed out, is well known to Jews, whether learned or unlearned, and does not worry them, since they base their consciousness of peoplehood on cultural and historical continuity (as do the British people, for example) and not on racial purity, which has been affected by a stream of converts ever since the Exodus from Egypt (in which the Israelites were accompanied by a "mixed multitude" of Egyptians).

Shortly after this, I found myself standing next to Koestler at an ENCOUNTER party and fell into conversation with him. Perhaps mischievously, I mentioned that I was the author of the review of *The Thirteenth Tribe* (in *The Listener*), upon which Koestler started and said, "That bloody review!" Encouraged by this, I asked him what grounds he had for thinking that Judaism was a racialist re-

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ligion. Koestler replied vehemently that Judaism was indeed a racialist religion, and that no progress would be made by Jews until they acknowledged this.[1]

Again I asked him what were his grounds. He said, "What about the ban on intermarriage?" I replied that the Jewish ban on intermarriage was exactly on a par with the Christian ban on intermarriage with non-Christians: it was intended to prevent the disintegration of the religious community, and was not racialist, since conversion to Judaism was possible for anyone of any race or colour. Hitler, I pointed out, did not allow conversion to becoming an Aryan.

Koestler waved impatiently, and said, "What about the prayers which Jews make to 'the God of our fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob'? Isn't that racialist?"

"No", I said. "Maimonides was once asked by a convert whether converts were allowed to make this prayer, and he replied that they were, since the fatherhood of Abraham was a spiritual one."

Again Koestler was impatient. "How many Jews have read Maimonides?"

"How many Catholics have read Aquinas?" I retorted. "But if you want to know Catholic doctrine, you don't ask a Catholic peasant, you look it up in Aquinas."

"I can't talk about this any more", said Koestler, and walked off. I was sorry that I had not had a chance to say that when a convert to Judaism is given a Hebrew name, he is called "son of Abraham", a fact well known even to the unlearned.

I CONCLUDED that Koestler was not amenable to argument on this topic. It meant too much to him. He had arrived at his own solution to his problem of Jewish identity and nothing was allowed to disturb it. He resented his own Jewishness, but anti-Semitism had forced him to declare it. The setting-up of Israel, he felt, let him off the hook. He was now free to be the Gentile, integrated into European culture, that he always wanted to be. The view that there was no Jewish culture, only a racialist, tribal attachment, was too convenient to him to be subjected to factual examination.

The ironic thing is that Arthur Koestler was a Jew to his finger-tips, not only in physical appearance, but in his whole habit of thought. The search for truth, the concern for justice, the this-worldly messianism (surviving even the attempt to submerge himself in British pragmatism) all put him into the great tradition of Enlightenment Jews from Solomon, Maimon and Heine to Freud. But he was unaware of this. His extraordinary intellectual qualities, bred into him by a culture that prized learning far above wealth or physical prowess, he ascribed to his own merit or to European civilisation. To him, to be a Jew meant to be a frightened, downtrodden, ragged East European ghetto-dweller, with whom it was an offence to be associated, and who had to be exorcised either by the development of a new race of Jews in Israel (who, he convinced himself, were becoming "blue-eyed and fair-haired"), or by absorption into Gentile culture. But if Koestler's hopes for the disappearance of a distinctive Jewish culture were ever to be fulfilled, where should we get another Koestler?

[1] See Koestler's contribution to *Next Year in Jerusalem: Jews in the Twentieth Century*, (ed. Villiers, London, 1976), where he refers to the "vicious circle" by which Jews, as he alleges, are responsible for anti-Semitism: ". . . the archaic, tribal element [in Judaism] engenders anti-Semitism on the same archaic level."

Parapsychologist

By Brian Inglis

SOME OBITUARIES of Arthur Koestler left the impression that his interest in parapsychology was an aberration: perhaps a sign that his formidable mental powers were waning. Nothing could be further from the truth: it was a logical, almost inexorable, development, as he himself came to recognise—a little ruefully, as he would have preferred to get some answers to the questions he had endlessly posed, rather than be plunged into further mysteries.

For convenience, his experiences with "psi", the parapsychologists' shorthand for the paranormal forces involved (and to Arthur's amusement, used by physicists about the forces they are dealing with in a not very different sense), can be divided up into five categories: all of them occurring before *Darkness at Noon* made him famous, and all described in his autobiographies.

First, a certain accident-proneness—he gutted part of the family home by putting candles too close to some curtains, and a can of baked beans exploded in his room, knocking him out—at the age of nine gave neighbours the impression that he was psychic, in the sense that a child around whom poltergeist phenomena occur may be regarded as psychic, so that he was "much sought after for table-lifting seances."

Second, there was the childhood ride in an ambulance during which he was to be possessed by the "oceanic sense" for the first time: what would now be described as an altered state of consciousness, which was to return, to his relief, while he lay

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under sentence of death in a Spanish gaol, taking away the dread.

Third, there were experiences of the kind he was to describe in *The Invisible Writing*. In 1932 he witnessed that remarkable charlatan Eric Hanussen provide a demonstration of psychometry, telling a man he had not previously met about his past while holding the man's bunch of keys. Hanussen got it totally wrong—about the man: but another journalist, a woman who was present at the test, subsequently reported that every detail had been correct, about *her*. Three years later, when his faith in communism was becoming shaken, and in a fit of despair Arthur was trying to commit suicide by sticking his head beside a gas oven, a book fell out of the shelf above him and crashed on his head—of all books, it was the Second Brown Book, describing the extraordinary humiliation of the Nazis in the *Reichstag* trial. And in the chapter "The House on the Lake" he described his stay with a woman who was psychic, and the curious manifestations which occurred.

Fourth, there were "meaningful coincidences" in his life which he found hard to attribute to chance. An episode which contributed to the onset of the "oceanic sense" in prison was the recollection of Thomas Mann's description of Consul Thomas Buddenbrook's falling under the spell, when he was dying, of an essay of Schopenhauer's, which had for years stood unread in his library, arguing that death is not final, but "a reunion with cosmic consciousness." Arthur after his release wrote to Mann to thank him for the comfort this memory had given him. Mann wrote back to say that while sitting in his garden, he had felt a sudden impulse to read the essay, which he had not looked at for close on forty years. As he went to find it in his library, the doorbell had rung, and the postman had handed in Arthur's letter.

Fifth, there was the evidence for the reality of ESP which J. B. Rhine and others were providing in laboratory trials: and this, I suspect, is what clinched matters as far as Arthur was concerned. I do not know at what stage he became convinced that Rhine's results effectively demonstrated ESP; but in *The Invisible Writing*, moving forward in time, he described meeting his old friend the mathematician and philosopher Hans Reichenbach in 1952, and assuring him that Rhine's statistical method had been vouched for by no less an authority than R. A. Fisher—causing Reichenbach to go pale and drop his ear trumpet: "If that is true, it is terrible, terrible. It would mean that I would have to scrap everything and start from the beginning."

And this incident gives a clue to why Arthur's interest in parapsychology did not emerge—or, rather, resurface—sooner. In 1931, soon after he had been appointed Science Correspondent to the Ullstein chain, he had inserted an advertisement in their papers under the heading CREDO QUIA ABSURDUM, asking for authentic reports of occult experiences, but saying they would not be taken into consideration unless attested "beyond any reasonable doubt." At the risk of reading too much into it, I would suggest that it neatly encapsulated Arthur's attitude to the subject: awareness that it had an element of absurdity (the baked beans, the Brown Book); a recognition of the need, nevertheless, to explore the subject: and a desire for evidence of a kind which would be beyond *reasonable* doubt—not the unreasoning doubt of the sceptic.

But soon afterwards, Arthur formally joined the Communist Party, and was consequently debarred from further pursuit (occultism, as Rubashov reflected while awaiting his execution, was inadmissible, a "bourgeois deviation"). Later, the War, and then the Cold War, preoccupied him. When in 1955 he renounced political writing—"Cassandra has gone hoarse"—he joined the Society for Psychical Research, and in 1961 defended J. B. Rhine in an article in *The Observer*; but during the 1960s he was locked too closely in battle with the next generation of Reichenbachs—materialists, reductionists, logical positivists, neo-Darwinians, behaviourists—and too well aware of how delighted they would be to hang the label "occultist" on him, to take any risks. When I interviewed him for a TV programme on "Telepathy" in 1966 he was distinctly cagey (partly, admittedly, as he was suffering from a monumental hangover), insisting that he was still sceptical, that his mind was split on the subject.

ONLY WHEN the great trilogy was finished did he feel he could make his position clear. In the early 1970s, he was to recall in *Bricks to Babel*, he had some psychic experiences which, though they were of "little evidential value", were for him "subjectively important": he allowed himself to be co-opted on to the Council of the SPR, and in 1972 put the case for psychical research in *The Roots of Coincidence*. He put it, as he admitted, in "a gentle, timid, roundabout way", but this sufficed to show why the paranormal had become so important to him: it fitted in neatly with his other interests, providing parallels with nuclear physics, possible leads for research into evolution along neo-Lamarckian lines, and a tie-up with mysticism. And although he soon resigned from the SPR Council (appalled by the back-biting), he soon, as one of the trustees of the *KIB* Foundation, began to explore various research possibilities, including one which was very much his own—"Project Daedalus."

Some years before, Arthur had reasoned that if the mass of historical evidence for levitation, some

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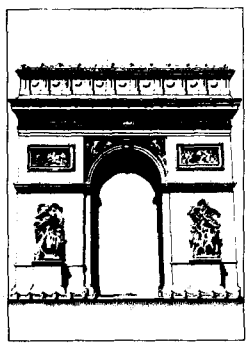
Paris, 1947

October 1st 1947



DINNER MALRAUX.

We met them in the bar of the Pallas-Athénée (an enormous luxurious bar full of glamorous **demi-mondaines** *in extravagant clothes). Malraux spent twenty minutes at least studying* **"La Semaine á Paris"** *and finally decided that we should dine at the Auberge d'Armailhés.*

We drank vodka and ate caviare and blinis and balyk and **soufflé sibérienne**, *and M. got very tight, so that it was even more difficult to understand what he was talking about than usual. However, we did understand him to say that in using his reputation as a man of the Left to help the reactionaries he was taking a big gamble, in which he believed he would succeed; but if he didn't i.e. if de Gaulle, once in power, did not act as Malraux thought he should) he would feel he had betrayed the working class and there would be nothing left for him but to* **se faire sauter la cervelle.** *When K [oestler] said "what about the General's* **entourage**?" *Malraux replied* **"L'entourage du Général, c'est moi."** *We thought this rather silly, but were later told that Malraux is in fact the only man who dares to give de Gaulle advice, who sees his speeches before he makes them, etc. Towards the end of the evening he started talking the most awful nonsense, particularly when he asked K about his psychology book and then, instead of listening to what K said, started telling him the meaning of certain psychological terms, all of which he got wildly wrong. At this point K mentioned Bergson, whereupon Malraux went right off at a tangent and started talking at full speed about Bergson; after a bit he said* **"Je sui le plus grand philosophe du monde."**

"Do you mean **you** *are, or are you quoting Bergson?", asked K bravely.*

"Non, c'est moi qui parle", *replied Malraux —but we didn't feel quite sure, and I don't think he knew himself by that time what he was talking about. He then turned to me and asked me whether, as* **une anglaise**, *I thought that T. E. Lawrence had* **"de l'accent."**

I said I didn't know what he meant by that, and he said, no, I do use the word in a rather special sense. He explained, but in such a way that both K and I understood different things. I thought—and still think—that he was talking about Lawrence's **style**; *K understood a reference to personality or something else, I forget what.*

Malraux also told us some rather long historical anecdotes about ancient Persian princesses and princes which I remembered his having told us on a previous occasion; but as **K** *always seizes such opportunities for a short rest, he still hasn't heard them. Madeleine [Malraux] was very beautiful and charming. . . .*

8.x.47

DINNER CHEZ CAMUS.

We all took food and drink, and K and I, after careful marketing in the rue de Buci, brought a cold roast chicken, a lobster and some champagne, as although there were lots of other delicious things to be had, we felt French people would not think them worth eating. However, we did take a few shrimps and **palourdes** *for ourselves, which indeed everybody else spurned, except Mlle [Suzanne] Labiche [Camus' secretary]. The other guests were: Sartre and Simone [de Beauvoir], Kappy [Harold J. Kaplan] and his wife, and Celia [Paget Goodman].*

K started talking about the "Iron Curtain" which has separated the French intellectuals from Anglo-Saxon culture since 1939, and said what a pity it was that, through no fault of their own, they were ignorant of all the latest developments in, e.g., psychology, biology, neurology; also, most important, that they were unacquainted with the semanticists and in particular had never read [Ogden and Richards'] The Meaning of Meaning.

We told how we'd met Merleau-Ponty's wife, who is a doctor and helps at brain operations, in the Mephisto, and K had asked her whether she'd ever seen an operation on the third ventricle and whether she knew about Forster's syndrome, and how she'd obviously never heard of it; and said we found it curious that Merleau-Ponty, who writes books about psychology, shouldn't have primed his wife to look out for this.

Sartre and Camus expressed polite regret at their ignorance, but didn't sound very sorry about it; they said they didn't think ventricles existed in the brain, only in the heart; and they further thought that psychology and the empirical sciences had nothing whatever to do with philosophy, and consequently they weren't interested in them. I was not surprised at this, having already been told by Camus (who got quite **emballé** *about it) that nothing of any interest had ever come out of laboratory work, and that it was particularly unlikely that anything worthwhile had ever been done in American laboratories. . . .*

EXTRACTS FROM THE AS YET UNPUBLISHED DIARIES OF

Mamaine (Paget) Koestler

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of it well-attested, has any validity, it may be that any of us could, in certain altered states of consciousness, have the same experience that has so often been reported of yogis, saints, and sometimes sinners. We may actually begin to "lift off"—lose a little weight, for a brief period; on much the same principle as even those of us who are not psychic (Arthur, incidentally, insisted that he himself was not) occasionally receive what appear to be telepathic communications. Not without amusement at the absurdity of what he was doing, Arthur invested in one of those weighing machines that used to be seen at railway stations; and with Rosalind Heywood (whom of all the members of the SPR he most admired) and John Cutten, he ran a series of trials in which anybody who felt like it could sit on the machine and think themselves, or abstract themselves, into a frame of mind in which prelevitation effects might occur.

They had one promising result, from a child; but that was all, and eventually the machine was disposed of. In the mid-1970s, however, reading about "biofeedback"—and in particular, reading Elmer and Alyce Green's *Beyond Biofeedback*, with its description of the ways in which feedback and autosuggestion could be usefully combined—gave Arthur a new idea. Suppose there is some particular type of altered state of consciousness—induced by meditation, say, or hypnosis—which promotes a psychokinetic effect: might not subjects, with the help of feedback, learn to recognise it and exploit it?

A new weighing machine was constructed to Arthur's specifications by Geoffrey Blundell, and installed in the basement flat at Montpelier Square. It was much more sophisticated than its predecessor, with automatic monitoring equipment registering even small changes of weight on a chart. As always, Arthur was full of ingenious ideas for improving performance; instead of the feedback being delivered in cold and impersonal ounces of weight loss, he suggested symbols (such as a rising balloon). The Foundation's Research Officer, Ruth West, moved into the flat as resident curator, and again volunteers were invited to join in the research into—*not* levitation, Arthur was careful to insist (that would be "misplaced concreteness", a term of Whitehead's which he often cited), but "mood-induced fluctuations in body weight."

ALAS, HIS ILLNESS intervened, though not before there had been some indications that his hunch was correct: fluctuations in body weight can occur in the absence of any known physical explanation. And as the machine (and "Project Daedalus") are now in Professor John Hasted's charge at Birkbeck College, that hunch may still be shown to have been yet another example of the importance (as he put it in *Janus*) of "the art of putting two and two together to make five"—the act of creation.

I FIRST MET Arthur nearly twenty years ago with his friends John and Patsy Grigg, and we immediately had one of those verbal tussles which he so relished, following his denunciation of "dowsing" —it might have been over radiesthesia, the use of *dowsing for diagnosis and treatment of illness*, which he dismissed as an example of what he described as parapsychological pornography. He was to change his mind—about dowsing, at least; and about acupuncture, which in an *Observer* review of my *Fringe Medicine* he had contemptuously described as a "delusion." In a footnote to the review, when it reappeared in 1981 in *Kaleidoscope*, he admitted he had been "obviously wrong." He had studied the evidence (and he had been given acupuncture himself, for backache, and it had worked).

In connection with medicine, orthodoxy and heresy strove for supremacy in his mind. He had no time for the medical profession, but he trusted his doctors and obeyed them punctiliously, with an alarm clock always at hand to tell him when it was time to take the next dose. But one of the first proposals he made as a trustee of the Foundation[1] was that we should explore ways to research into the work of healers (and he had had hand-healing himself, following a road accident which left him a residue of neck pain).

Parkinson's disease is sometimes accompanied by a clouding of mental faculties; not in Arthur's case. On the last occasion Ruth and I went round to dinner at Montpelier Square, earlier this year, I was arguing that he was being unduly cautious in his reception of Rupert Sheldrake's hypothesis of "formative causation", which fits very well into the neo-Lamarckian scheme. Arthur had been impressed by Sheldrake; but, looking back, I can see that this influenced him to be cautious; he wanted confirmatory evidence from trials (it may soon be provided, thanks to the *New Scientist*'s initiative in getting some started). He was as lucid as ever, in his marshalling of all the evidence.

OVER THE YEARS he had mellowed: but Ruth remarked, after we left on this occasion, that she had never known him more philosophical, more serene. In *The Invisible Writing* he had recalled how

[1] The *KIB* Foundation changed its name to The Koestler Foundation. It plans to raise money to promote the kind of research which Arthur Koestler had in mind in making his Will; and to this end a Koestler Fund has been opened, which will be administered by the Foundation, in collaboration with his will's trustees.

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in extricating himself from communism,

> "it gradually dawned on me that my only happy periods were the periods when I was chasing after the arrow in one shape or another. It was the only form of life which gave me peace of mind—not the prim feeling of virtue of do-gooders and hospital sisters, but the creative joy, the happy furore of building and shaping, of adding a brick to the edifice of that more humane future in which I still believed. . . ."

I feel sure it was the knowledge that he had never stopped adding those bricks—psychic bricks, among them, in spite of the discomfort they sometimes brought to his orderly mind—which gave him that final tranquillity.

Koestler's "Micromemoirs"

Pages from an Unpublished MS.

14.viii.1978

MALRAUX (who, besides his heroic virtues remained to the last an incurable *épateur*) published a book called *Antimemoirs*. I have never understood what he meant by that. However, there may be something to be said for writing one's *micromemoirs*—microscopic slides of memory, projected on a screen in a dark lecture room.

He owns a rich store of such slides, including some unique aspects of his native Budapest before the 1914 war; they may have come from a cardboard box in some unique curiosity shop.

21.viii

AMONG THE EARLIEST and rarest is the image of a little boy crouched on a black embossed leather sofa, with an earphone pressed to each ear. The two earphones, when not in use, hung on two hooks on the wall above the back-rest of the sofa. They dispensed all day long soft gypsy music, Lehar operettas, football bulletins, weather reports, and other news. This amenity, found in every self-respecting household, was called *Telefon Hirmondo*, meaning newscaster; but it had nothing to do with the conventional telephone, enthroned in its ornate cradle on my father's desk. It was fed by a different system of wires and probably run by some enterprising private company, which anticipated wireless broadcasting by a decade or two. I have never come across any mention of such an amenity in any other country.

There was another unique amenity which that enterprising capital offered its pleasure-seeking and sports-loving inhabitants. On all the major road junctions they could consult a green panel of the kind which at railway stations indicate the arrival and departure times of trains by exchangeable letterings shown through slits. But these green panels conveyed a different kind of message: they informed you whether the immensely popular skating rink in the zoological gardens (the second largest in Europe) was *open/closed* or would be OPEN FROM x O'CLOCK TO y O'CLOCK. The last slit on the panel indicated the temperature of the town early in the morning.

24.viii

THERE IS ANOTHER series of micromemory slides illustrating the grooming habits of the Austro-Hungarian male. The series starts with a rather faded portrait of my father wearing a black hair-net, tightly pressed on to his head by elastic rubber bands. He wore it after his bath in the morning while he was shaving and getting dressed. This treatment, combined with a liberal application of pomade, plastered his hair down (it was parted in the middle) to glossy, sculptured perfection. A second cosmetic appliance, butterfly shaped, pressed tightly on his moustache. With similar effect.

His shaving ritual took ages and was a joy to watch: the sharpening of the cut-throat razor on the leather strop; the conjuring of a white cloud of foam with shaving-stick and brush; the grimacings and facial contortions needed to offer the razor a smooth stretch of skin; the rubbing with "*odkolon*" (read: *eau de cologne*); and the final dusting with the white powder-puff.

25.viii

A PERMANENT SOURCE of pride for the Budapesters was their *Foldalatti* or underground railway—the first on the European continent. It was opened in 1896 to commemorate the millen-

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The Destroyer

FOR most of us, I suppose, and for socialists especially, the first and indelible impression of Arthur Koestler is associated with "Darkness at Noon."

The revolt against Stalinism in various moods has inspired some truly great literature but nothing has ever displaced "Darkness at Noon" from its pre-eminence. Nothing else by Koestler himself ever equalled it, and that is no disparagement of the range and originality of the rest of his writing, and the relentless honesty with which he searched out new ideas to his dying day. "Darkness at Noon" destroys the enemy with a ferocity Karl Marx himself would have envied.

KOESTLER **in personal encounter could be a destroyer too, and that recollection is also irrepressible. He was the most formidable arguer I ever saw in action, and I can still lick the wounds he inflicted on me more than 40 years ago.**

I FIRST MET HIM *in 1940 and fell immediately a swooning victim to his wit, charm and inordinate capacity for debate and alcohol. He had just been released from Pentonville, his favourite prison, as he called it. He was in Pioneer Corps uniform and in his best fighting spirit, ready to help us tackle Hitler before he took on Stalin.*

I RECALL HOW, **all in the space of one No. 11 bus ride, he convinced me (*a*) that the only infallible cure for asthma was to seek urgent psychoanalytic treatment and (*b*) that the cure would no less infallibly produce an alternative disease with less congenial paroxysms. The advice was all offered with that same bewitching smile.**

HE PAID US *the compliment of choosing England, this "land of virtue and gloom", as his own. He mastered our language and became the greatest foreign writer to do so since Joseph Conrad. Along with George Orwell and a few others, he changed the way the English-speaking people have thought and felt and acted in the totalitarian age.*

Quite a feat for a shy, fragile, rootless, self-conscious, guilt-ridden Hungarian Jew who had arrived penniless on our shores in our finest hour.

Michael Foot
in THE OBSERVER *(London)*

nium of the conquest of Hungary by Arpad's Magyar hordes in A.D. 896. I travelled on it twice a day to school and back; it had only a single line running from near the Danube embankment under Andrassy Ut 1-1 (Budapest's Champs Elysées) to the Zoo; and I can still smell the peculiar, flinty and refreshing odour of ozone in its elegantly tiled stations. One can only wonder why the Russians made such a do of the Moscow underground which was opened more than half a century after the Magyar version.

But the oddest thing about that precocious *Foldalatti* was that as a means of transport it co-existed for several decades with horse-drawn omnibuses running on rails, partly along the same route. The geological stratification was reversed; the top layer was dominated by the 19th-century townscape of horse-drawn vehicles in all shapes and sizes, while the subterranean level belonged to the modern age of electrified transport.

1.ix.78

ALTHOUGH my own grooming rites became modernised by safety razor, shaving-cream and so forth, I stubbornly persisted in using a hair-net for many years. I even brought one with me when, in 1940, I escaped from Nazi-occupied France to England—it was one of the few items I was able to save from the *débâcle*, for my whole luggage consisted of a French army satchel.

The end of the cult came a few years later when, for a while, I shared a house in Chelsea with Cyril Connolly and another writer. This other writer had often watched me coming out of the bathroom with the magic net on my dripping scalp, and maliciously spread the rumour among the female members of the Connolly crowd that I regularly *slept* in a hair-net or elastic night-cap. This gave rise to much giggling and conjecture, of which I was unaware, among those seductive maidens, until one of them, refusing to be seduced, innocently remarked that she had been told I only made passes with a net around my head. This made me so irate that, with a perfect *non sequitur*, I burned that cherished last relic of my continental past.

Still on the subject of grooming; the dandyism of the Austro-Hungarian male in the pre- (first) War period seems in retrospect decidedly odd. I have mentioned the use of the powder-puff after shaving. The folded handkerchief in the breast-pocket, its three vertices sticking out by one inch—no more, no less—was *de rigueur*, and so was the tie-pin for the cravat; without them you felt undressed.

This also applied to gloves. When out of doors, you had the left glove on and carried the other one in the gloved left fist; thus the right hand was free

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to shake hands with acquaintances you met. On cold days you may have been pardoned for putting both gloves on; but in summer, however hot it was, you still had to carry gloves, although you didn't have to have the left glove on.

Footwear was also regulated. The correct thing was to wear long stockings, held up by rubber bands just above the knees. Socks were ungentlemanly; if worn nevertheless, they had to be held in place by suspenders. Bootlaces were tolerated, but it was more *chic* to wear buttoned shoes. To fasten them the buttons—there was a row of perhaps a dozen—had to be teased through the tight button-holes. This could only be done with a special tool: the buttonhook; without it, you were lost. There was a comedy about a lady of high society who was exposed as an adulteress when her husband found a buttonhook in her handbag.

An indispensable part of a gentleman's equipment was a pack of visiting cards. You carried them in your wallet, or in a special case. There were two kinds of them: business cards which showed your occupation and address; and private cards which showed only your name, printed in italics. It was unthinkable to call on somebody—in an office or at his home—without sending in your card.

6.ix.78

TO HAVE your first hundred cards printed was a memorable event, comparable to wearing long trousers for the first time. The long trousers came in generally with puberty—before that, boys wore shorts. But it was often preceded (as in my own case) by a bitter struggle with mama who insisted on treating you as a baby and refused to acknowledge that you were growing up. The visiting cards represented another landmark on the road to manhood. University students usually had them made after passing their first series of exams and were awarded the title of "Candidates" (*Cand. Med.*, *Cand. Lit.*, etc); thus I became a *Cand. Ing.* (of Engineering) on my first set of visiting cards, and mighty proud I was of them.

A child's world in that day and age was riddled with taboos. On a train journey, never travel in one of the front coaches; the last coach is safest in a collision. If you drink water after eating fruit you risk catching cholera. This applies particularly to water-melon and plums (which are therefore called "cholera fruits").

There are only two public events which I remember from that pre-First-War period: the sinking of the *Titanic* in 1912 and Bleriot's flight in 1909 from Dover to Calais (the first crossing of the Channel by air). After the *Titanic* disaster all of us schoolchildren had icebergs on the brain. We did not feel much pity for the drowned passengers, but the iceberg must have struck some archetypal chord: the unseen menace lurking in the deep. I was seven at the time and familiar with all sorts of horrors; thus it is understandable why I still remember the *Titanic*. But that the Bleriot episode should have stuck in my mind is something of a mystery to me, because I was only four at the time; and yet I distinctly remember everybody talking about the Francia Repulo, the French flier, so I don't think that it is a case of earlier memories being superimposed on my earlier ones. . . .

Remembering

By Melvin J. Lasky

April 1983

THE OBITUARIES *in both the USA and Europe have referred to the death of Arthur Koestler as "the passing of one of the great figures of our times." Do you agree? What would Koestler himself have thought?*

MJL: "Yes, I do agree. The headline in *L'Express* (Paris) over Raymond Aron's memorial article was *'Un des plus grands.'* The *New York Times* had it on the first page, and not merely because of the shock of the double Koestler suicide. The German newspapers like the *Frankfurter Allgemeine* and *Die Welt* all had long moving tributes. But it is often the case that when an important writer is no longer around, when the 'living presence' is removed from the scene, his influence wanes, his memory fades. Sometimes it is a publisher who is instrumental in maintaining the reputation by maintaining the books in print. Sometimes a writer becomes, by some fluke, a posthumous cult figure. More often the books disappear from bookshops, and a few years later the general reader—especially in a younger generation—wonders what all the literary or intellectual fuss was about. I am no prophet of literary modes or political fashions, and won't even venture to predict how Koestler's reputation will survive. Much depends on the critical literature to come, and especially the definitive biography that remains to be written."

—Are you thinking of Koestler the novelist, the ideologist, the scientist?

THIS INTERVIEW *was conducted by Diana West, editor of the "Yale Political Monthly", and published in its issue of May 1983.*

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MJL: "This is complicated. One of the novels will be read, I feel sure, a hundred years from now—*Darkness at Noon.* One of the histories of science is also masterful, and will continue to command interest: *The Sleepwalkers.* And at least one long political essay—Koestler's in *The God That Failed* anthology—will not lose its excitement for a long time. But I suspect that Koestler as an intellectual of the 20th century cut such a spectacular figure that his two autobiographical volumes, *Arrow in the Blue* and *The Invisible Writing*, will remain as invaluable contributions. We all often tried to persuade him to write a third volume, carrying forward the personal history from 1940. His publisher, Harold Harris (of Hutchinson's here), tells me that Koestler, together with his wife Cynthia, left a manuscript among their papers. We will have to wait and see what that amounts to. Otherwise the biographer to come has a magnificent challenge here—a 'life and times' in the old classic format."

—Are you suggesting that the Writer will have to share the future limelight with the Man? How would Koestler have felt about that?

MJL: "No, for all his natural (and unnatural) vanities, he would have wanted to be the Writer. He liked to say he would exchange all of the twenty or so books (now collected in the Danube Edition) for two or three that would live 25 years after his death, and he would exchange those for one that would be read a century from now. Of that he could already be sure in his lifetime. Still, the spectacle of his stormy life in a turbulent century provides themes of lasting historic significance. He was perhaps the greatest of the 'committed intellectuals', more 'various and undulating' than his French friends and counterparts who were so busy writing about *engagement*: Sartre, Camus, *et al.*"

—But the political aspect of the commitment or engagement disappeared in the 1950s when he started devoting himself to scientific problems?

MJL: "True, after his famous pronouncement in 1953 that 'Cassandra has grown hoarse' he rarely, if ever, took up political issues. Even in 1956, at the time of the revolutionary anti-Communist insurrection in Budapest, he hesitated to return to ideology and protest. He probably did (as his Hungarian friend, George Mikes, likes to tell it) march down to the Hungarian Legation in London and proceed to throw a number of bricks through the windows. But at the large British protest meeting about the Soviet ruthlessness in suppressing the Hungarian dissident movement under Imre Nagy, he declined to make a public speech, although the audience was shouting for him. So it was that privately we could talk, as in the old days, about the agitated public issues of the day—there was no lack of interest here, or faded sense of curiosity—but he wrote no articles, made no speeches, was untempted by book themes. From nine to five, he devoted himself to the historical, philosophical, psychological and aesthetical problems of science and scientists (and on every page there is a phrase and insight of great originality!); yet from six to midnight, over cocktails and dinner, he would get agitated over what was happening in our time."

How wide and specific were these "private" political interests? Did they include such burning issues of the 1960s and '70s as the student movement, Black Power, war in Viet Nam, Israel and the Arab world, etc., etc.?

MJL: "As far as our own conversations were concerned (and he was a multifarious person and very different with different friends), he rarely concerned himself with specifics, with the headlines of the day. He was interested in ideas, in the large movements of world politics and military powers, and in the elements of folly and destiny in history. He didn't refer to himself as 'Cassandra' for nothing. Most of his life he was wrestling with a sense of doom, and doom kept winning. It won in Berlin and he fled from Hitler; it triumphed in Madrid, and Koestler had his 'dialogue with death.' France fell, and he scurried from Paris. In London the Nazi bombs fell and destruction and defeat loomed yet again. I remember when he left Europe to live in the USA, he looked back at the old world with almost melodramatic fears. On his island in the Delaware—not far, by the way, from where Washington made his crossing—there were a number of old dilapidated barns, some distance from his colonial house. We once walked by, and I had suddenly to climb all the fences with him to see all the sheds and stalls. 'And these', he said, 'I will clean up and fix up . . . for the refugees.' He always expected the worst to happen, and he had no great confidence that there was enough intellectual clarity, political vigour, or sheer institutional doggedness in our free democratic-capitalist societies to withstand a century-long challenge of the Soviet Empire. It was not only that Cassandra had grown hoarse; there were no new warnings to give. He had uttered his basic cry for libertarian resistance. It might help. What else was there to say?"

—So on all these other issues he said little, practically nothing?

MJL: "Sometimes a public issue fired him. I need not mention (unless you take them to be 'political' in the sense you are asking about) the campaigns

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against Capital Punishment, wherein both in England and France his passionate polemics proved to be something of a turning-point in barring hanging and the death penalty. But certainly more political was the special issue which he wanted ENCOUNTER to do in 1963 on the decline and fall of British society. He called it *Suicide of a Nation?*, but we agreed only at the last minute to add the question-mark. It was, as always with Koestler, a dramatic conception of a doom-laden issue; and if one rereads his contributions, and most of the others which he solicited, it remains all-too-pertinent to British affairs today."

—British politics, then, rather than American or European?

MJL: "Yes, he was very much attached to England. I saw him in his various houses all over Europe, beginning with our first meeting in 1947 at his Seine villa at Fontaine-le-Port. He looked like a Frenchman there, and quite like an Austrian in his chalet in Alpbach. He lived in Italy, and toyed with settling in Switzerland (presumably after the final decline and fall of Anglo-Saxony). But nowhere was he so much 'at home' as in England—in that lovely old Long Barn at Sevenoaks (once owned by Harold Nicolson and Vita Sackville-West), in the last years at Denston in Suffolk, and mostly in that large Kensington house in London's Montpelier Square. Of course, it had nothing to do with real estate, although he did have a keen nose for property values, for what the Austrians call in a Kafkaesque way *'Realitäten.'* It had, mostly, to do with his love affair with the English language; and no foreigner, except possibly Joseph Conrad or Vladimir Nabokov, mastered English prose so fluently, so elegantly. And it had to do with a reluctant, sneaking admiration for the residues of English political culture, the 'Mother of Parliaments' and the Magna Carta and all that, feeding the libertarian traditions which were still strong in the maintenance of civil freedoms and indeed civilities. He used to say that 'England is the best country to sleep in. . . .' "

—Did this tend to make him feel like an Englishman?

MJL: "Never, so long as he had to listen to himself talk in that guttural tone and fractured accent! And, even more, he understood the psycho-national peculiarities of the insular English pride too well. No foreigner could ever become an Englishman. This amused him, delighted him, depressed him, impressed him. He would never ever belong; and as much as something in him always wanted to transcend his alienation, still he was deeply content to be a 'rootless cosmopolitan.' I had to think of how that smile of grim self-satisfaction would have come over his face, when I read in *The Times* of London a report of the suicide in Kensington, referring to 'Arthur Koestler, the Hungarian writer. . . .' Hungarian? You could count the years he lived in Hungary on the fingers of your hands. He rarely and barely spoke Hungarian; and he certainly never wrote in it. And to this day not a single book of his has been translated into Hungarian for readers in his 'homeland.' No, he had to make do with his rootlessness, and his love-hate relationship with the land and culture in which he had established himself."

—Was this a source of personal unhappiness for him?

MJL: "Happily so. 'Happiness' was not one of his human ideals, not even the pursuit of it. His temperament needed tension, his soul fed on its wounds. His achievement was to create a certain literary and intellectual order out of the chaos of his restlessness and resentment. It made for his complexity, and took the simple edge off his struggle to formulate things clearly and convincingly. It created space for ambivalence and ambiguity."

—How do you see this in the works?

MJL: "I won't take up the scientific writings, for it is fairly obvious that he was both in the Enlightenment's rationalist tradition and in a more modern quasi-mystical or 'imaginative' tendency. The life of science and reason was lived by the great 'sleepwalkers.' There was a mystery about the recognised 'acts of creation.' A logic-chopping sceptic to the end, he still was increasingly attracted to the paranormal. But the point is even more obvious in his masterpiece, *Darkness at Noon.* Many of Koestler's friends secretly believed that Victor Serge's novel on, roughly, the same theme was a better, truer, richer book: *The Case of Comrade Tulayev.* But Serge's achievement was straightforward. In Koestler there is a dark deviousness, a complexity, even (as Empson would say) a 'type of ambiguity.' Serge told the story of the Bolshevik tragedy; Koestler's novel lived it. The reader was trapped in history and politics; and there was not necessarily any obvious way out. Let me offer you one example. Most readers were, of course, convinced' in the sense that they comprehended the death and degradation of the old Bolshevik Rubashov and the dialectical ruthlessness of Gletkin, the secret-policeman and inquisitor. It was, to put it plainly, an anti-Communist novel. Yet Koestler knew—and we talked about it a number of times, when I would come back from Berlin (where I was editing *Der Monat*, to which A.K. contributed regularly)—that there was a perverse paradoxical aspect to the novel. I told him of

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one East German student in the *DDR*, Soviet-trained in his ideology, who began to have serious doubts—until he read a smuggled copy of *Darkness at Noon*, called *Sonnenfinsternis* in the German translation. This restored his faith in the Bolshevik revolution! The tragic twisting of minds and loyalties which led Rubashov, innocent of all the outrageous charges against him, to accept making the great sacrifice of his life for the Party which he had served so long—this (and there were more cases than this one) proved to be darkly seductive. Doubts were banished; long live the revolution, even if it devours all its children. . . ."

—Was Koestler upset by this?

MJL: "On one level I suspect he must have regretted it. One doesn't preach so loud and eloquently to let any of the sinners slip away to the Devil. But he certainly understood it, and knew too well the complications of brain structure (and their devious ways of plugging into the mind and spirit) not to expect the resilience of folly, especially in the self-destructive attitudinising of ideological passions. At any rate it is, as I have been suggesting, a darkness which constitutes the strength in the shadows of the greatest political novel of our century."

—Then political novels do not necessarily have to be convincing?

MJL: "No, what I have been meaning to say is that, of course, such a masterpiece changes minds, convinces millions. In France when it appeared as *Le Zéro et l'Infini* it became an immediate bestseller and a political factor in French life of truly major proportions. But this happens in its time and place. Decades later all the illusions of Sartre's juvenile *gauchisme*, so despised by Koestler, ruled the intellectual and cultural attitudes of Paris. It took another book and another writer to shock the French Left out of the "eternal recurrence" of its ideological illusions—Solzhenitsyn and the *Gulag Archipelago* trilogy. This accounts for the fact that on the French Left today there is the sturdiest democratic resistance movement to Soviet blandishments of anywhere in Europe. This, of course, pleased Koestler, but also wryly amused him. Why is it so difficult to learn, why does it take so long? And why are so many of the painfully learned lessons so quickly forgotten?

We often talked about the phenomenon of 'historical amnesia', and in fact I was inspired by him to do my long intellectual history of the ideas of *Utopia and Revolution* [1976, University of Chicago Press] by his own infectious despair over political forgetfulness. I was reminded of this only the other day when reading one of the remarkable German obituary articles. This one appeared in a left-wing Berlin newspaper called *Tageszeitung*. The author was a well-known radical named Arno Widmann. He made the striking point that when he was a student he had read everything of Koestler he could get his hands on. He still had the copies of the books, and many political passages (especially in *The Yogi and the Commissar* of 1945) were heavily underlined. And yet, as he ruefully recalls, when the militance began in the 1960s he found himself an active member of a revolutionary Marxist-Leninist group! 'How could it be', he asks, 'that I hurtled forward into the very same traps which Koestler had, with every possible precision, exposed for all of us?' He begins to wonder about the futility of all political literature—and this may be a clue as to why Koestler turned so sharply away from writing more such books and articles in the last 30 years. As Widmann asks, 'What is all this writing for—and all this reading for—when it has no results and lasting effects, even where it has impact, indeed impressed itself on to the mind of the reader . . . ?' "

YOU SAY "SHARPLY TURNED AWAY", but earlier on you were still arguing that his concern for political events and public affairs remained.

MJL: "To be sure, it remained with him to the very end. I happened to send him only a few days before his death a protest letter to *The Times* about something to do with the theme of the Stalin 'Moscow Show Trials.' This was his old great theme, and on the Monday of the last days back came his signature. Strangely enough, *The Times* never published it—although there was an undeniable editorial interest in Koestler's last political thought returning to the noon-darkness of almost half-a-century earlier.[1] But this is only a piquant point. Far more substantially it needs to be recorded that his public concerns became less ideological, but more personally committed. History is difficult to move; but lesser things can be accomplished: reforms, good deeds, humane changes. I mentioned the capital punishment campaign. There were also the Koestler Awards (peronally financed) which were given to inmates of prisons—for paintings, poems, novels, essays of outstanding merit. Here again he succeeded in moving mountains (if only little bureaucratic ones) to get the British prison authorities to let the 'light of culture' into the cells. Koestler's own prison ex-

[1] The text of the letter was published in ENCOUNTER, July–August 1983, p. 19.

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periences remained too much with him for him not to be moved to a life-long concern with the plight of all prisoners.

—There was continuity? then, rather than disjunction?

MJL: "Koestler would have coined a catchy word for it, combining the twin thrusts of his life and work. He was, after all, in his own mirror a 'Janus': not 'two-faced', but with two faces looking in different directions. As in his combination of rationalism and mysticism, so in his devotion to themes in both social and natural science. I wish he had thought up a name for the strange and fascinating animal that he was. It was a verbal-mythological device for which he had a penchant. For *Suicide of a Nation?* he made us hire a cartoonist to draw a lion and an ostrich with its neck buried in the sand, and he called the 'characteristically British' hybrid an Old Struthonian (from *struthio*, the Latin for ostrich).

And in Iceland where he, the 'passionate duffer' at chess, rushed to watch the Bobby Fischer-Boris Spassky championship tournament, he was intrigued by Fischer's personality, so tough and yet so sensitive, and he came up with another hybrid, the mimophant, mingling the touchiness of the delicate mimosa plant with the toughness of the thick-skinned beast."

—You used the phrase, "he made you" . . . does this

On "Forgetting" Koestler

Berlin

IN a curious way Koestler's political writings demonstrate the futility of all political literature. For example, in my own German generation, dominated by the Left-revolutionary commitment of the SDS *in the 1960s, there was hardly any one who had not read Koestler, at least one of his important books. And yet each of us hurtled forward into the very same traps which Koestler had, with every possible precision, exposed for us. For my own part I had already read "Darkness at Noon" ("Sonnenfinsternis") as a schoolboy, and the essays in "The Yogi & the Commissar" were favourites of mine. And yet in the year 1970 I found myself active in a Marxist-Leninist revolutionary group. I still shudder when I think of it. Indeed in my copy of "The Yogi" there is this passage which I had heavily underlined:*

> *"We have thought of the Battle for Progress in the classical terms of Socialist trench warfare with neat, tidy front lines between the classes —and are caught in a perplexing fluid war of social movements with mobile units breaking loose from their social bodies; large sections of the working class joining the fascist ranks, radical wings of the younger Tory generation operating on the Left of the Trade Unions, bureaucracies and managers establishing themselves in vital hedgehog positions. And there we stand in no man's land, dazzled knights in rusty armour, with a well-thumbed handbook of Marx-Engels quotations as our sole guide—the truest and profoundest social guide of the last century, but alas! of modest use on the topsy-turvy battleground today."*

HOW COULD *I have noted and marked this passage and then proceed myself to dig into those musty old Marxist-Leninist quotes for political guidance? What is all this writing for—all this reading for—when it has no results and lasting effects, even where it has impact, indeed impressed itself on the mind of the reader? To be sure, Koestler went in for a few grotesque anti-Communist performances, but I had only heard about them vaguely, and from persons who were too stupid to appreciate even the most obvious of Koestler's qualities; and yet it was they who won out on the ideological Left and Koestler's critique disappeared from our consciousness. It is terrifying, and indeed discouraging, to realise what perverse stupidities we are capable of. Why have the others proved to be so much wiser? . . .*

PERHAPS *we should not have allowed ourselves to be misled during the Cold War simply because anti-Communists had so many strange bedfellows. Perhaps we should not have been so easily influenced by Hannah Arendt's writings about imperialism and authority, leading as they so often did to Marxist-Leninist conversions. It may well have been a mistake for us to go on blithely opening so many "Karl Marx Bookshops." At any rate it throws a revealing light on our 1960s and '70s to note that one of the most important books of the first half of the 20th century, namely "The God that Failed", is missing from the German catalogue of books available from our West German publishers. It was last heard of as a DTV paperback in the year 1962. . . .*

Arno Widmann
in the left-wing TAGESZEITUNG
(West Berlin)

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imply that he was dominating, authoritarian, even overbearing to his friends and associates, which possibly led to his reputation as being a very difficult man to get along with?

MJL: "Oh yes! When he had an idea or an inspiration, he was obsessive; and when he was in the grips of an idea it had to grip you too. One had to listen and be involved. Most of the time—and especially for an eager receptive editor, always like a magpie looking out for brilliantly shining objects—one was pleased to. On occasion it got too much. This might lead to a quarrel, or rather (which amounted to the same thing) a 'silent misunderstanding' which might last for a year. This happened over the ENCOUNTER special number on national suicide (*nomen et omen?*). I didn't quite agree over many points, but was (as I had promised) to let him have a free hand, and not only to write but to edit as he pleased. He was miffed, I suppose, that I withheld total agreement and full intellectual approbation. Like many inveterate sceptics he didn't like running across scepticism himself."

—Are you suggesting the intolerance of a tolerant man?

MJL: "Once again there is a bit of ambivalence here. In earlier days he made enemies easily, indulged in quarrels, excommunicated friends, refused to listen to dissenters, would declare war on certain journalists, newspapers, magazines, publishers, and the contemptible political or philosophical tendencies which they were held to represent. With the years he grew milder, more controlled and, in part, more serenely indifferent to passing agitations . . . even on important personal and professional matters. I once commissioned a long article on his scientific writings. It would have been a make-or-break event in our friendship. He knew, for example, that I had great respect for Sir Peter Medawar, the Nobel-prize-winning scientist, who was a severe critic of Koestler (and I can remember at an ENCOUNTER literary party once, how Arthur circled around the room like a jungle cat, when both he and Medawar had turned up . . .). And when Professor Stephen Toulmin produced a very sharp essay I, of course, published it.[2] He wrote a brief letter to the Editor for publication, correcting only a matter of style. He never mentioned the ENCOUNTER critique to me. Nor did it, as far as I was aware, trouble our relationship."

—In the end, then, he did not turn out to be the cold literary machine or the egotistical intellectual battler that appeared in the pictures given by so many interviewers and critics?

MJL: "At the memorial service for Arthur and Cynthia, held recently here in London, at the Royal Academy, there was a warmth and a loving atmosphere which I have rarely encountered at such functions. His passing left an unmendable hole in the personal as well as intellectual lives of many many persons, hundreds of friends, thousands of readers. At the crematorium, a few weeks earlier, there were of course only a handful,[3] present on a cold rainy day for a disagreeable mechanical ceremony. Two plain pine coffins, with handwritten labels. No religion, no prayers, no Bible, no music, no farewell. Someone read a few snippets from his *oeuvre* of fifty years, and then the fire. But the coffins on the table did not slip away. Evidently the crematorium's turn-table machinery was on the blink. Koestler, who was one of the most fanatical devotees of mechanical efficiency I have ever met—everything just had to work: automobiles, refrigerators, mountain-climbing equipment, motorboats—might well have been amused. Even to the end, and beyond it, he was living his *oeuvre*. There was, if I may say so, a ghost in the machine.

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[2] Stephen Toulmin, "Arthur Koestler's Theodicy", ENCOUNTER, February 1979, p. 46. Arthur Koestler, "Koestler's Reply", Letters, ENCOUNTER, March 1979, p. 91.

[3] Mostly personal friends, who all knew each other. But there also arrived a small group of strangers, huddling together, evidently the diplomatic delegation of the euthanasians, present to take credit for the exit. The night before I had been appalled to watch on London television the official spokesman of the euthanasia group (of which A.K. had been a vice-president) obviously staking out public claim for "the achievement", the "breakthrough" of the two Koestler suicides; it was evidently their first "double exit."

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NOTES & TOPICS

Hanging, Hang-Ups, Hanging Together

On the Death Penalty—By EDWARD PEARCE

THE HOUSE OF COMMONS has now voted by an astonishingly large majority against the restoration of capital punishment. It is a fact everywhere acknowledged that no man with claims of humanity, liberality of mind, or common decency can be an advocate of the death penalty. Rather more than the EEC it is a topic which admits only of angels and lower, tainted beings. We are well stocked with angels in the Commons, but the generality of the people who elect them are of coarser fibre.

Am I then to make a case for the noose and the drop, for the sharpest of all short shocks? Not exactly. On this issue your correspondent is a constitutional ditherer. Dithering, like matrimony, is an honourable estate, especially if arrived at by the right route, and there is nothing to apologise for here.

What continues to surprise me, though, is the certainty, the zealotry, the quality of revealed religion which attaches to the most active members of the abolitionist camp. It is a pity indeed that opposition to the death penalty is not one of the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England. It would give the clergy of that sect something to subscribe to. Not that the opinion of the Church matters to me. The reflections of ecclesiastics on any topic, spiritual or lay, have for this citizen all the weight of a bone button. But I wonder at that certainty, and at the certainty of all the other abolitionists. I also very much dislike the moral arrogance, the Tattersall's ring of social responsibility, which accommodates the ardent opponents of what Dr Runcie calls "a barbarity." Let us ask some questions and try thereby to reach some principles.

First, is execution by hanging barbaric and an evil in itself? If one considers the long literature of gallows-gloating from the *Newgate Calendar* to the *News of the World*, it surely is. (Incidentally, the late Rayner Heppenstall made something of a success only a few years ago by producing a selection from the *Calendar*, a sort of *Palgrave's Golden Treasury* for the morbidly disposed.) Significantly, opponents of the death penalty also like to dwell on the theatrical minutiae of hanging. They do so partly out of a deep conviction, which I share, that hanging (and most of the other options) are nasty; and partly because this helps put their most reasoned and considered opponents out of court.

Another question: do we conduct ourselves on either side of this argument with dispassionate, cold reason? Surely it is a case of hearts, imagination, and anger all round. And the largest single factor for most abolitionists is that their minds find it very easy to conjure up the bizarre and horrible marionette-show of hanging—rope, beam, hood, hangman, drop and waiting stretcher. They gag with disgust at it. So do I! But is that the end of argument? To paraphrase St Augustine, should we say, "The solar plexus has spoken; argument is concluded"?

It cannot be, because for those who care to exercise their imagination more generously, to be shocked by all things shocking, the particulars of most murders—what happens to the victim—are not sweet reading either. Where the more arrogant abolitionists go wrong, utterly wrong, is to suggest that the public simply has a barbarous taste for cruel and unusual punishments. "Give 'em a chance and they'd flock to public executions, probably want to show it on the telly. . . ." Enlightenment has, after all, its own Golf Club bars. And this line of lip-curling élitism is hugely insolent towards the, at least, 78% of the public who, when polled, vote for capital punishment. Is it not just minutely conceivable that the imagination of the public is focused on other things than those which preoccupy the other side?

MY OWN FEELINGS were evilly jolted by a paragraph in the *Daily Telegraph* the other day, reporting the inquest on Susan Maxwell, a schoolgirl from Northumberland, who was abducted after a game of tennis and whose murdered body was

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found months later. "Mr Fordyce Maxwell, Susan's father", said the report, "left the court. He did so on the advice of the Coroner, Mr Edward Huntback, as evidence about the decomposed condition of Susan's body when found, was to be given."

My own guess is that the public—not withstanding its willingness to read about executions in the *News of the World*—also lets its heart go out to the innocent, to those whose bodies are subsequently found. Is it not a question worth some reflection that while the names of many murderers, whether they finished in the corner of the prison yard or in speculative conversation with Lord Longford, are remembered, those of the victims are not?

Their deaths, or disappearance which precedes proof of their deaths, obtain newspaper attention in a generous measure. But there is no compassion industry to linger over them, to return and rerun the awfulness. Ruth Ellis, who indeed ought not to have suffered death but who did kill someone, is the object of steady, fascinated, replicated publicity. But who, for every thousand who have heard of Ruth Ellis, has heard of Jennifer Cardie (I cannot even be absolutely certain that I am spelling her name correctly)? She was a little girl who disappeared from home in Northern Ireland and was found dead a few days later, the victim of a sexual murder, different from, but not less wholesome than, the political murders being carried out all around by Sinn Fein-IRA. The name just happens to have stuck in my mind because I find it hard to forget the face of her father. But really, who does remember her? Who remembers long the names of little girls found dead in ditches? The best minds of our time, the lawyers who write bubblingly impassioned stuff about "going back into the dark ages" in the pages of the quiche-eaters' Sunday papers, the Churchmen dead set against barbarity, do they remember such names or focus much of their compassion upon such little ones? And do they recall the relentless Hebraic grandeur of Jesus on the subject of "whosoever offendeth against one of these my little ones"? "It were better for him that he should be cast into the sea with a millstone about his neck", he said, remember? Sorry to keep saying "remember" but there are so many people who keep forgetting, and forgetting so much.

SO MAY IT NOT BE the case that the public, so far from being barbarous, is responding with the same instincts as the founder of the religion in whose name the clergy go to-and-fro, playing at their social role in a vacuum of their own creating? May it not be that there is more compassion in the anger of the man in the pub who has just heard about a terrible and wicked crime than in all the hubble-bubble of Blom-Cooperdom? For the public mind is largely fixed on the offence when the offence takes place. May it not be the intelligentsia who have the fixation about hangings, since that is the subject which moves them to their real feelings?

Is there not a void of feeling, a great shrugging towards oblivion among the better sort, when it comes to contemplating those whom the police gather up and commit to refrigerated steel drawers?

The attitudes which condition us affect our handling of the supposedly subjective part of argument. If you are more horrified by execution than by murder, then your interpretation of deterrence will be quite different. The line becomes, "Can you prove beyond any doubt whatsoever that capital punishment deters?" and you will supplement it with the excitable, sarcastic "Perhaps if it does we should hold them in public to deter them even more." Above all, you will say, "What about the innocent who might be convicted? What about Timothy Evans?"

If you are more cut up about victims, the question is, "Do we have at least a chance of saving innocent lives by the death of the guilty? What number of harmless people might not live if the law were stronger?" Incidentally, accepting as I wholly do that the executed Timothy Evans was the victim of a dreadful miscarriage of justice, how does one weigh that death and all the mental anguish which he suffered in contemplation of the scaffold? What do you weigh it against, anyway? Presumably against the lives which might be saved if capital punishment is a deterrent, and against the anguish which the families of the dead also suffer.

I HAVE SPOKEN with some bitterness at what I regard as the self-esteeming vanity of some abolitionists. It is a good point to interpolate that the Evans case was raised and entered the public domain by the efforts of a brave and admirable man of no public fame, the owner of a small factory near Darlington, Herbert Wolf, who being kin to many who had died innocently, held the death penalty in horror. (It was subsequently made a national issue by John Grigg in *The Guardian* and the rising Harold Evans, then editor of Darlington's *Northern Echo* and soon to go to the *Sunday Times*.) With Herbert Wolf at least, argument would be difficult and reproach unimaginable.

But special cases and the nobility of individuals do not excuse us from thinking. One cannot prove anything but one can show some things to be likely. The murder rate has gone up, and done so frightfully since abolition, though it has long been disguised by the consignment of many formerly capi-

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tal cases to the status of voluntary manslaughter—so that a busy court, burdened with lists it cannot bear, may proceed. The number of policemen killed is much higher than in the preceding similar length of time before repeal, the number of firearm offences up out of all measure (roughly forty-fold).

Post hoc propter hoc, for those who want to dance on philosophic needles, is not proof but it is likelihood. There exists a likelihood that while the murder rate in a more brittle society would have risen anyway, it would not have risen so far. Which is to say that given the existence of the death penalty an uncomputed number of people, innocent as Timothy Evans was innocent, would not have been shot over the till, strangled in a field, blasted into something obscene with a sawn-off shotgun while doing a job as policeman or caretaker.

And are these of no account? Are their deaths of less account than those of convicted murderers because no drum-roll precedes them? Are we then indignant about what is put on display, about episodes played out under the klieg lights, but not too much troubled about all those units of incremental death who are in the statistics but not near the consciences of the good reforming Conservative Ministers who put it about that they would resign if, had a vote passed, the government then sponsored a restoration bill?

In such profile-tossing I can perceive only vanity, arrogance and self-preoccupation. I observe more chic than compassion among the most prominent opponents of the death penalty, something which was not true in the days when capital punishment stood, and the likes of Arthur Koestler fought against it. We are dealing not so much with a conviction as with a glib notion of social acceptability. "I don't think I know anybody who is in favour of hanging", said a liberal press colleague the other day. With the polls standing as they do, that indicates a somewhat straitened acquaintance with the public.

The most terrible reflection from all this is that life has become cheap. There are more murders and they matter less. Our threshold for the killing of shopkeepers and old women has risen to accommodate the numbers killed. And the political class, as the vote showed, runs scared of the noisiest and best-connected publicity drummers, while the Prime Minister, not for the first time, plays at being tough, and sits back.

NOW WHAT IS THE TRICK of this thing? Where did the restorers go wrong? How might they go right another time? May I suggest that a very high percentage of the irrational *schwärmerei* among highly educated people for the condemned criminal lies in the method of execution. I have no difficulty in sharing the squeamishness felt by those who abhor the gallows. It may be quick, but it is quick and nasty. It has an attendant ceremony and ritual from which one does flinch. But in an age which does not trouble itself overly about abortion, for whom euthanasia is on the up, and which lives with so much more murder, death itself can hardly be the objection.

Suppose that hanging as a method were categorically ruled out in advance by restorationists, and with it the various nasty alternatives available internationally—electric chairs, gas chambers, lethal injections, and so on. Is it really unimaginable that some Socratic form of death, which neither hurts nor is violently imposed, but one which is taken when the will and courage are ready, cannot be devised? If all humiliation, all ritual, all the customary forms in which the *aficionados* of the scaffold delighted were put away and the simple toxic means, which would be used in euthanasia, were substituted, would that be wrong? And if such a penalty were applied to the most serious cases of murder, roughly in line with the 1957 Homicide Act, with a likelihood that some prospective innocent victims would be saved, would that then be barbaric? What must we do to save victims from criminals without being barbarous in the nostrils of the clergy of all denominations and of none? May we do anything?

We have profound, unacknowledged problems; it is not clear how we are to get out of them.

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Infinite Mischief

Lowell's Life—By DOUGLAS DUNN

FROM THE EARLY 1960s to the end of the 1970s, Ian Hamilton edited *The Review*, and then *The New Review*. Both were magazines in which the poetry of Robert Lowell was enlisted as a salutary reminder of what contemporary poetry could be like, without, however, anything so crude as editorial advocacy. But Hamilton in those days was a stern critic of Lowell's poetry. In his review of the volume published in Britain as *Selected Poems 1938–1949*, for instance, disheartening phrases cropped up so frequently that not much seemed left to go on: "thoughtlessly vulgar and sensational", "monotonously high-pitched rhetoric", while the vocabulary of the best of Part 2 of "The Quaker Graveyard at Nantucket" was said to be held "just this side of its characteristically florid crush", and so on. He was severe on *The Mills of the Kavanaughs*, more but not much more enthusiastic about *Life Studies*, and warmed to the poet of *For the Union Dead*—"the most important poet now writing in English." Latterly, he was seriously disappointed with *Notebook*. Two poems, Hamilton claimed, were as good as anything Lowell had written, but "the vast majority of the poems", he went on to say, were simply "shoddy."

The reviews I've quoted from are more subtle than space permits me to indicate. What they show is not only Hamilton's gift for fastidious disparagement, but his honesty. By temperament, he is the sort of critic who proceeds from scepticism until convinced by testimony and evidence, and he has kept up this attitude as Lowell's biographer.[1] So troubled and messy was Lowell's life that any other literary temperament faced with the job of recording it would have given in to a succession of apologies and evasions and cute little outbursts of moral righteousness. As an outsider, too, Hamilton is aloof from the closely meshed literary, political, and private controversies of the American scene.

Lowell was a son of a famous Bostonian American family. His father, however, was from "the poor (i.e. the merely comfortably off) branch of the Lowells", one in which piety and literature were more prominent than financial prestige and real power. "The Lowell millions, though, were elsewhere", Hamilton writes, sketching the family background with something of a not-quite-cynical touch which readers might find characteristic of the book as a whole. Those richer relatives were "cousins all, but hardly intimates, and in a quite separate financial league." One wonders if this might not have been better set down less journalistically, even at the risk of ponderousness, and with a more emphatic respect paid to the sociological and literary burdens of Lowell's origin. They contributed massively to his poetic material and to his mind as a writer. Hamilton respects his subject, and his own ignorance of psychiatry, and does not guess at conclusions, or connections between Lowell's early life and his neuroses. It is a method which invites the more speculative of his readers to try their hand as lay psychologists, for his narrative presents and suggests.

We can be forgiven, I think, for seeing the unhappiness of Lowell's life as a tragedy of the Bostonian sub-aristocracy, too creative for his milieu to contain in the more hectic 20th century which does not invite a polite practice of letters. We can be forgiven, too, for suspecting a connection between Lowell's early life in the shadows of familial power and his distempered obsession with totalitarian figures of history in subsequent attacks of madness. Even to an untrained observer of the causes of mental malaise, Lowell's earlier years look like a psychiatrist's field-day. One hears his mother's cool, hereditary snobbishness in the letters Hamilton quotes. It was the dismal lot of his father to detract from the grand respectability so dear to the soul of his socially expectant wife and fail to provide the dash and glamour of a serving naval officer. Worse, the unfortunate Robert Spence Traill Lowell III was a disappointment to his son. The naval officer was a man's man who had no control over his own house, while his wife nagged him out of the Navy and into a business career which failed to work out. "In his forties, Father's soul went underground."

It is not surprising to learn that as a child and

[1] *Robert Lowell: A Biography*. By IAN HAMILTON. Faber & Faber, £12.50.

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adolescent Lowell was awkward, physically strong, aggressive and given to childishly tyrannical bullying. In fiction, with that family life, he would have been either a brute or sickly and sensitive. As in all good literary biography, Hamilton's fluent narrative bestows something of the quality of fiction on his subject: it follows from the coincidence of good books about interesting lives. A more academic researcher would have taken pains to avoid that impression; but it is its presence which leads me to believe that Hamilton was right to avoid lay diagnostics in attempting to pin down the sources of Lowell's mania. "My mind's not right." Famous (or notorious) as that bald confession in "Skunk Hour" is, and curious (or prurient) as readers must be to know in what way Lowell was sometimes mentally ill, it has been enough to acknowledge his own admission, say as much as can be said, and describe its effects on his life, work, friends and marriages. There is no chapter on "Poetry and Madness" (which might have been a temptation). Instead, Hamilton lets the subject speak for itself with the result that the issue resists simplification.

ARMED WITH HIS unhappiness, Lowell launched himself on a literary career with a singlemindedness and devotion of the sort we are used to finding admirable. Faced, though, with the effects of dedication on other people (if, that is, we did not know them already), Lowell's life and its devotions might leave us in two minds. Towards the end of his time at St Mark's "upper-crust Episcopalian boarding school" in Massachusetts, he was taught by Richard Eberhart. At Harvard he had a chance to talk to Robert Frost, who seems to have discouraged him. We appear to have, in the late 1930s, the beginning of a period in American poetry where it is necessary for a tyro to attach himself to a teacher and a university department. Lowell's family relationships were clarifying into open rebellion, mainly through a clumsy and possibly cruel engagement to a friend's cousin.

Lowell, however, had other things to think about. He was in on literary history. He arrived in Tennessee to study with John Crowe Ransom and Allen Tate at the time when Ransom had just accepted a post at Kenyon College in Ohio. It resulted in a famous falling-out of Ransom and Tate which raised the glamorous spectre of Confederate honour and loyalty. "The Lowell family of Boston and Harvard University", wrote Tate, "has just sent one of its sons to Nashville to study poetry with Mr Ransom—I do not say Vanderbilt, because young Mr Lowell will follow Mr Ransom to Ohio."

Having just turned twenty and published nothing, Lowell had access to the company of Ransom, Tate, and Ford Madox Ford, and was soon to begin

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lifelong friendships with Randall Jarrell and Peter Taylor—a literary start which one cannot fail to see as fortunate, perhaps even as peculiarly privileged. This is rich biographical ground, strewn as it is with letters, reminiscences, memoirs, fictional accounts, and notes, even, of telephone conversations, all of which here, as throughout the book, Hamilton draws from to vivid purpose. "How sad and serious we were", Taylor wrote in his story "1939." "We didn't hesitate to say what we wanted to be and what we felt we must have in order to become that. We wanted to be writers."

With one dismissed, misguided engagement already behind him, Lowell wooed his first wife Jean Stafford "something fierce" during 1938. On Christmas Day that year, in Boston, he smashed his car and was fined for "driving an automobile while under the influence of liquor and driving dangerously." Jean Stafford suffered "massive head injuries—everything fractured, skull, nose, jaw, everything."

Leaving her in Boston, Lowell returned to Ohio and poetry while the episode encouraged his father's loathing and disappointment and his mother's conviction that psychiatric help was needed. His parents fled to Europe in the summer, a consultation with Jung having been arranged in advance by the psychiatric sonneteer, Merrill Moore. As Lowell wrote later, in *Day by Day*:

> *That year Carl Jung said to mother in Zurich,*
> *"If your son is as you have described him,*
> *he is an incurable schizophrenic."*

His relationship with Jean Stafford continued and the possibility of their marrying strained the nerves of his determinedly prim mother and timidly enraged father. Marry they did, though, in April 1940, before Lowell, having graduated "summa cum laude" at Kenyon, moved to a fellowship at Louisiana State University where he was to study with Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren. Not only are two additional literary figures ushered to the nurturing of Lowell's poetic gifts and education, but one cannot help but notice the undue "professionalism" which American poetry was beginning to assume through its universities.

At Baton Rouge Lowell immersed himself in theology as well as poetry. Six months after marriage he was baptised into the Catholic Church. "Once Cal went for Romanism, he was all Roman." The relentlessness of his new religious fervour added to the strains on his marriage already exerted by his personality. Husbandly hectoring imposed piety on Jean Stafford and a no-nonsense approach to how her time was to be spent—"no newspapers, no novels except Dostoevsky, Proust, James and Tolstoy." Lowell's boorish tyranny in matters of mind and spirit must have become intolerable to a talented woman trying to find her literary way as a writer who would later become known for her sensitivity and delicacy. She drank heavily, smoked heavily, and fell foul of apparently numerous psychosomatic disorders. Their quarrels led to an incident in which Lowell re-broke her nose, already disfigured in that car crash in Boston. Remarkably enough, the marriage lasted until late in 1946, by which time Stafford was reduced to alcoholism and Lowell was in jail as a Conscientious Objector.

Lowell's anti-war stance is a curious and perplexing episode. Hitherto one looked on it as an admirable exercise in dignity and principle. Yet, as Hamilton points out, "Most of his childhood heroes had been military heroes, and he had shown himself to have a rare appetite for both tyranny and violence; but he could see little that was splendid in the way modern wars were fought." He had earlier tried to enlist in the hope of training for commissioned rank (and one feels that that would have been important to Lowell). After seven previous medicals, he wrote to his mother, "The chances are that I will be rejected on account of vision." Shortly after, though, he was called up. On the day before his induction, he wrote to President Roosevelt enclosing his "Declaration of Personal Responsibility."

Lowell's objections were Americanist, moral, political and religious, and his "Declaration" was written with passionate control. Hamilton prints the document without comment or general background, but it would have been interesting to know how many other young Americans refused to fight on the grounds of the USA's alliance with the USSR, and in these terms—"a totalitarian tyranny committed to world revolution and total global domination through propaganda and violence." This, too, was a time when American veterans of the International Brigade were being refused the right to wear their country's uniform. Lowell was perhaps as much trapped in the spider-web of political feeling as he was morally aloof from the demands of the State, and trapped, too, by the idiosyncrasy of his mind. Hamilton quotes lines from a draft of "Memoirs of West Street and Lepke", where Lowell writes of

> *my conscientious objector statement meant to*
> *blow the lid off*
> *the United States Roosevelt and my parents.*

It is hard to escape from the suspicion that Lowell's principled demeanour smacks of interior aggrandisement, or an even quirkier selfishness, an uncontrollable craving for martyrdom or principle, especially when the episode is seen in the light of his unfitness for military service.

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BY THE AUTUMN OF 1944 Lowell's career as a poet was on the march. *Land of Unlikeness* had appeared, and for a first collection issued by a small press it was widely reviewed and well received. "Some of the best poems of the next years ought to be written by him", wrote Randall Jarrell, whose hunch proved accurate. Hamilton is broadly unconvinced by other writers' praise of *Land of Unlikeness* and *Lord Weary's Castle* (1946). He reads them for hints of Lowell's later concerns in style and subjects. Their rhetorical mastery is not worth so much as a nod, although Lowell's rhetorical phrasing survived his development as a poet to the last. To Hamilton, Lowell's early achievement was that he avoided the obvious models—Eliot, Auden, Dylan Thomas and W.C. Williams. "Lowell's voice was arresting simply because it could not be shoved into any of these pigeonholes—it was fiery, yes, but it was also educated."

Only when Lowell's rhetoric is toned down by the "restraining influence" of the prose sources behind "Mr Edwards and the Spider", "The Exile's Return", and "The Quaker Graveyard at Nantucket" does Hamilton admit to the strength of Lowell's writing at this period. More importantly, he points to the "braking, liberating influence" of personal experience in some of the lines of "Rebellion" where there is enough "clarity, respect for detail and variety of rhythm" to support his preferences and the biography's narrative which, largely, portrays the poetic advances and private terrors of digging deeply into personal materials, "a mortal life, a single history."

There may not be *much* wrong with Hamilton's opinion of *Lord Weary's Castle*, but there *is* something wrong with it. In his *Robert Lowell: The Nihilist as Hero*,[2] Vereen M. Bell writes more subtly and more damagingly of these poems. "The chief conflict of Lowell's early poems", Bell says, "and the source of their intensity, is an abrasion between existentialist and formalist modes of understanding." If that means what I think it does, it suggests something of the cultural and historical moment through which Lowell's poems were feeling their way, the loud noise of the poems expressing a struggle with inhibition as well as a straightforward desire to impress. A poem like "Rebellion", for instance, is still shocking in its exposure of a family quarrel, and in the 1940s must have seemed more so.

EXCESS AND RESTRAINT in verse are coloured and controlled by prevailing moral attitudes. It was good fortune for Lowell's verse, and misery for his life, that he worked in areas of life and feeling in

[2] *Robert Lowell: The Nihilist as Hero*. By VEREEN M. BELL. Harvard University Press, £14.00, $17.50.

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which notions of candour and restraint were, as they still are, pertinent. The acceptance and criticism of what he wrote were to be affected by how the moral climate responded to "true stories" (the poet's life), dramatised as the narrative of poem after poem, book after book, and exposed with ruthless honesty.

As with most poets, it took time for Lowell to realise the nature of his gift, and that, in his case, it was to write about himself, his family, and what happened to him. Bell writes of "Mother Marie Therese" (from *The Mills of the Kavanaughs*) that "its supple modulations of speech rhythms and the formal heroic couplet measure give it a domesticated, being-in-the-world quality that has been missing from Lowell's poetry up to this point." What I find myself warming to is Lowell's struggle with the techniques of achieving that quality. In the manner of these things, that struggle would have been intuitive, and I doubt if there would have been anything so self-conscious as an aim ahead of him, a vision of future books like *Life Studies* or *For the Union Dead*. What Bell refers to as Lowell's "aggressively anachronistic formal tone" was, however, Lowell's necessity and our good fortune. Without it, Lowell would have had nothing so considerable and accomplished to dismantle into the idiom of *Life Studies* and *For the Union Dead*, into a quality of writing that is one of "being-in-the-world." And Lowell's later writing, his freer verse, is peculiarly achieved by taking formal verse apart, while rhetorical phrasings survive as well as a rhetorical way of conceiving a poem, or book of poems.

BEFORE THE SUCCESS OF *Lord Weary's Castle*, Lowell was demanding a divorce from Jean Stafford and saying he was no longer a Catholic. The Church, he said, had served its purpose, which, to Stafford, meant it had served its "literary purpose." Her disgruntlement is understandable. Increasingly, Lowell was to discover, and perhaps go out of his way to come across, the pains and indignities of dedication to poetry, the more so as autobiography swam to the surface of his verse. In April, 1947, however, whatever anguish he had caused and suffered in his private life was consoled by triumphs and accolades—the Pulitzer Prize, a Guggenheim Fellowship, an Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and, in September, the post of Consultant in Poetry at the Library of Congress. Photographed by *Life*, enquired about by Hollywood—by thirty, the ambition and dedication everywhere apparent in Lowell's career had already been congratulated and rewarded.

"He is an altogether magnificent creature and I am so glad that I never have to see him again that I could dance", wrote Stafford to Peter Taylor in 1948. Round about this time Lowell's behaviour led his friends to believe him on the verge of a crack-up. He was working on the poems of *The Mills of the Kavanaughs*, and the exhaustions of writing and the exhilarations of fame must have added to his precarious mental state. Soon, too, he had exciting tests at which to hurl his agitated mind. There was the matter of the defence of Ezra Pound in the controversy which followed the award of the Bollingen Prize to Pound's *Pisan Cantos*. At the writers' colony at Yaddo he threw himself into an anti-Communist witch-hunt with mean vigour and discreditable venom. He returned to the Church shortly afterwards. His friends, such as the Tates, knew Lowell was in "one of his manic phases" and suspected an association of religious mania with his new love, Elizabeth Hardwick, who was to become his second wife. Things were so bad that Tate was writing to Elizabeth Hardwick like this:

> "Cal is dangerous; there are definite homicidal implications in his world, particularly toward women and children. He has a purification mania, which frequently takes homicidal form. You must not let him into your apartment. . . ."

Within days, Lowell was in hospital and suffering the first of his spectacular breakdowns, calling forth the love, friendship, loyalty and frayed nerves of those attached to him. In the years up to 1968 he suffered fourteen more attacks of a similar nature. It makes for dispiriting reading; but as Hamilton's narrative unfolds with its delicate balance of discretion and dignity, one feels an unsentimental sympathy for Lowell's plight. To his credit, Hamilton has no taste for moralising. He allows his evidence to speak for itself while hinting (as so adept an ironist could hardly avoid) at the frequent proximity of tragedy to farce. As much as anything else, the book is a monument to the love and friendship of those who had to contend with Lowell's "attacks" and mania for so long, particularly his three wives. By itself, that says much for the courtesy, kindness of manner and essential decency of Lowell when "normal."

POETRY-AND-AUTOBIOGRAPHY is a tendentious subject. Sometimes it is treated with prissy fastidiousness and distaste, elsewhere with abject and artless approval. Hamilton identifies the confusion and chaos of *The Mills of the Kavanaughs* with Lowell's efforts "to adjust the instincts of the confessional to the decorum of an 'objective' work of art, to speak of his most personal shames with supreme impersonality." He identifies, too, a link between the voice of Anne Kavanaugh in the poem

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with that of Jean Stafford in the letters she had been sending Lowell since 1947. Passages of that poem grind with such teeth-splitting loathing and over-drama that one is jolted by the mercilessness of the talent that worked and reworked those nightmarish lines.

In a climate partly created by Lowell one is drawn to admire his reckless possession of poetry by painfully intimate subject matter, while wishing, perhaps, that he had done something else. *Life Studies* carried it a stage further. Reviewing the book in *Kenyon Review*, John Thompson wrote that

> "Robert Lowell's new poems show that this distance between persona and poem is not, after all, important to art, but has been a reflection of the way our culture conceived character. This conception seems to be dwindling now to a mere propriety, and for these poems the question of propriety no longer exists. They have made a conquest; what they have won is a major expansion of the territory of poetry."

If not propriety itself, then a sense of what might have been improper refused Lowell the extreme candour some readers of his poetry have rejoiced in. As Bell says of "Skunk Hour", there is something wrong in the world of that poem, but we are not permitted to know what it is. Hamilton's biography fills out some of the depressing details, but when it comes to particular poems his evidence is tantalising. Those famous lines from the end of "To Speak of the Woe that is in Marriage":

> *"Each night now I tie*
> *ten dollars and his car key to my thigh. . . .*
> *Gored by the climacteric of his want*
> *he stalls above me like an elephant."*

are shown by Hamilton to have been begun in a draft of "Man and Wife", ending on "Each night now I tie/ten dollars. . . ." Either Lowell ran against fiction as he drafted his closing lines, or he withdrew from accurate recording of an exposure which would have been too nakedly shameful, for these lines of direct speech would have been ascribed to his wife, Elizabeth Hardwick.

"Waking in the Blue" in its first draft was called "To Ann Adden (Written during the first week of my voluntary stay at McLean's Mental Hospital)." Adden was a psychiatric field-worker Lowell met during a brief stay at the Boston Psychopathic Hospital. His breakdowns were often preceded by an infatuation. Announcements of a "new life" were proclaimed as if a hapless decisiveness on Lowell's part could cure him once and for all. By its final version, though, "Waking in the Blue" was revised until free of its address to his temporary new love.

'A bombshell. Hersh flays Kissinger alive.' Newsweek

KISSINGER: THE PRICE OF POWER

SEYMOUR M. HERSH

The press called him Super K. The world's leaders knew him to be ruthlessly ambitious. For nearly a decade Kissinger dominated the foreign policy of the United States and created a style of international relations, from détente to shuttle-diplomacy, that was quintessentially his own. And yet, as Seymour Hersh shows, the achievements of Henry Kissinger were won at a high cost.
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WRITING TO John Berryman not long after he left hospital, Lowell commented on Berryman's nervous exhaustion by saying that "these knocks are almost a proof of intelligence and valor in us." It comes close to taking seriously the notion of a generation of poets as "victim heroes"—Roethke, Jarrell, Schwartz, Berryman, Lowell, and perhaps the less well-known Weldon Kees. In his *Paris Review* interview (1971), Berryman said:

> ". . . the greatest piece of luck for high achievement is ordeal. . . . My idea is this: the artist is extremely lucky who is presented with the worst possible ordeal that will not actually kill him. At that point, he's in business, Goya's deafness, Milton's blindness, that kind of thing. . . . I hope to be nearly crucified."

Whether Lowell believed this, I am unsure; but the impression I get from Hamilton's biography is that he probably did.

"Ordeal", though, can only be welcomed as good luck through a perverse acceptance of what the rest of humanity regrets. One applauds the fortitude with which suffering is endured, but not the suffering. Note, too, the imperfect selfishness on which this willingness to suffer is grounded. An infatuation with poetry and "high achievement" is made to lead to a disregard for those nearest the poet; nor does it take into account that "ordeal" for oneself is often a result of what happens to others—and these can be grievous events, in which we are included. Sensational suffering in Lowell (and Berryman, and Plath, and others) sometimes smacks of willed innovation in feeling, a compensation, perhaps, for real innovations in poetry after the best work of the Modernists. It introduced candour, ruthlessness, merciless honesty, self-loathing and other attitudes to poetry-writing, and one is under no obligation to be grateful.

Doubtless, the poets of that American generation looked on each other's ordeals with dread and resignation, as fame, suffering, and the circumstances of life gathered momentum in the 1960s. "John B. in his mad way keeps talking about something evil stalking us poets", Lowell wrote to Philip Booth. "That's a bad way to talk, but there's truth in it." In the last few years, in Britain at any rate, poets have withdrawn from that openly autobiographical surge in poetry which Lowell's work initiated. Fiction, word-play, and obliquity have all but overtaken the styles and subjects Lowell's work once looked like establishing as "a major expansion of the territory of poetry"—as if respectability and reticence have been opted for, almost as ways of avoiding the implications of Lowell's work.

It testifies to Lowell's courage, his obedience to inspiration—at great cost to himself and others, as heartbreakingly instanced in Hamilton's research—that he persevered with autobiographical art. It is the sort of daring which a poet's subordination of himself to what he feels he must do tends to create with something like wretched inevitability. "That's a bad way to talk, but there's truth in it"—other poets have thought so too, and shied away from Lowell's example, dropping ideas like "fiction" and "narrative" in attempts to cover their trails, or drifting effortlessly into a nerveless neo-Georgianism.

FOR THE UNION DEAD, like *Life Studies*, is full of passages riveted together by rhyme, half-rhyme, and metre, sonority haunting and tensing his poems with visitations of rhetoric. It was a book which hoisted Lowell to the crest of the fickle wave of American fame. Written as a lament "for the loss of the old Abolitionist spirit", "For the Union Dead" has itself become one of the best known of American poems. He was by then living through a period of American history in which cultural figures were expected to have an opinion on government and politics. "Waking Early Sunday Morning" (from *Near the Ocean*) is the best of the poems he wrote in fulfilling that expectation. Following an earlier critic, Hamilton points out how stanzas from an earlier version of the poem "express a distaste for the kind of 'ambition' that Lowell's admirers were now expecting of him."

> *I cannot take it. One grows sick*
> *of stretching for this rhetoric,*
> *this hammering allegoric splendour . . .*
> *bull-throated bombast stuffed with chaff.*

By now he was famous enough to turn down an invitation to a White House cultural soirée and find his public letter of refusal irritating LBJ and making the headlines. "When your private experience converges on the nation's experience", he told an interviewer in 1968, "you feel you have to do something." His intervention in public life, as with his apparently negative, possibly naive assistance to Eugene McCarthy, was conspicuously ineffective. He was soon to write in *Notebook*:

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Should someone human, not just our machinery
firing on its fling, do for the world and us,
surely they'll say he chose the lesser evil;
our wars were better than their marriages,
ape on she-shape boozing down Saturday night—
home things can't stand up to the strain of the earth.

"La Condition Humaine" (addressed to his daughter) contains a remarkable and pessimistic fusion of private life, love, and the near-global. Again and again in the poems of *Notebook* and *History*, Lowell sweeps through public and private statements with stunningly colloquial (and sometimes vulgar) erudition and the experience of a nervous system worn to shreds by "knocks."

Notebook was revised and added to until it formed a basis for three more books, *History*, *For Lizzie and Harriet*, and *The Dolphin*. That period of his life, from 1967 to his death ten years later, was productive, but his verse is marked with uncertainty and exhaustion. One can see his restlessness and indecision as the inevitable outcome of a career which had taken him from rhetorical formalism to hidden autobiography formally controlled, to autobiography increasingly "shameless" and free, to a poetry of the day-to-day. Frank Bidart, Lowell's helpmate and amanuensis, says of *Notebook*:

> "The aesthetic of *Notebook* had been very much connected to the whole desire for immediacy. It's not that (in 1967–68) he was interested in disposable poetry—but there had been that feeling that art can be much more connected to fleeting feelings, insights, perceptions, marginal half-thoughts and how all these bear down on one's life. . . . But I think that he was not at all happy with that aesthetic. And also he was simply not happy with the writing."

Hamilton calls *Notebook* a "weird, unshapely monument to [Lowell's] belief that his experience had somehow not been served respectfully if it had not been transmuted into literature." From autobiography to a poetry of quotidian dailiness in which formal satisfactions are hard to come by—the progress seems to have its own logic.

Soon after its publication Lowell was living in England, having left Elizabeth Hardwick. He married Caroline Blackwood in 1972. He had also revised *Notebook* into *History*, *For Lizzie and Harriet*, and *The Dolphin*, all three appearing together in June 1973. It was a tactic of literary reorganisation designed to clear up the confusion of his material and impose on it autobiographical exactitude.

On the evidence, Lowell seems to have cared deeply about the pain his behaviour and literary revelations caused others. His private Court of Appeal was Poetry, which said that he must do what Poetry must have—the device is rhetorical and sentimental, and I think it was to Lowell, too. In the case of *The Dolphin*, the revelations involved the use in poems of Elizabeth Hardwick's letters and conversations. Stanley Kunitz wrote in a letter to Lowell that there were passages in *The Dolphin* he could scarcely bear to read: "they are too ugly, for being too cruel, too intimately cruel." This kindly letter was clearly intended as a counsel of restraint.

Others advised a similar caution. Elizabeth Bishop was fiercer and sterner, and quoted to Lowell a passage from a letter of Thomas Hardy's:

> "What should certainly be protested against, in cases where there is no authorization, is the mixing of fact and fiction in unknown proportions. Infinite mischief would lie in that. If any statements in the dress of fiction are covertly hinted to be fact, all must be fact, and nothing else but fact, for obvious reasons. The power of getting lies believed about people through that channel after they are dead, by stirring in a few truths, is a horror to contemplate."

That Elizabeth Hardwick was not dead did not deter Bishop in promoting Hardy's perfervid conviction of the sacredness of truth—one which follows, I feel, from a belief in the sacredness of life.

Dictatorship over Needs
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Basil Blackwell

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But Lowell *had* changed his ex-wife's letters, he *had* mixed fact with fiction. A few months before, he had written to Elizabeth Hardwick: "My story is both a composition and alas, a rather grinding autobiography, what I lived, though of course one neither does or should tell the literal or ultimate truth."

In recognising that it was his "peculiar talent" to write "personal" poems, the last years of Lowell's poetry seem to show him risking the embarrassment and mockery of an audaciously deliberated candour. Before publication, though, he again revised *The Dolphin* "both for art and kindness." It appeared with Lowell hoping "that praise of the poetry might outweigh the human blame."

IN THE EVENT, Lowell regretted the use of Hardwick's letters in his poems. One does not get the feeling, though, that regret weighed very heavily with him. It is as if he knew from long experience that regret was a useless, inert passion, which counted for nothing when urged by a power within himself to engage his wholehearted attention to a kind of verse which would be greeted by cries of scandal and accusations that he had written for the public eye of private things better left unwritten or at least unpublished. There may even have been an uncontrollable mischievousness in him which enjoyed the pain his revelations caused. In *Lord Weary's Castle* he assaulted the inner ear of the reader, and in his later poetry he shocked his readers with autobiographical turmoil and a jagged confidence that has always been open to be misread as self-importance.

More than any other poet he exposed his naked ego with its genius and courage, its dedication and learning, its enthusiasm, its American vulnerability, and its selfishness, its monstrous humanity. In returning poetry to life, he did so in a way that was too honest to be merely beautiful, too firm in its knowledge of the pain of truth for it to console or placate. Considering the anguish of his life (much of it of his own manufacture, much of it not), it is remarkable that his poetry portrays his torments and his times with such lucidity and resource. With tact and skill, Hamilton has demystified Lowell's poetry simply by showing the life from which it came with clarity and unsentimental sympathy.

Shifts & Frictions

On R.K. Narayan—By HILARY SPURLING

WHEN R.K. NARAYAN[1] first started writing at the beginning of the 1930s, there was no Indian novel: he had grown up soaked in ancient epics like *The Mahabharata* and *The Ramayana* (Narayan reckons, in the introduction to his English version of *The Ramayana*, that the story is familiar in one form or another to almost every one of India's five hundred million souls), and been force-fed at school on Scott and Dickens which he gulped down without enthusiasm, six or eight books at a time, to please his father. Narayan senior was headmaster of the high school in Mysore which his son attended. But any attempt at passing on his own fanatical belief in education came to grief as such schemes generally do in Narayan's novels, whenever fond and hopeful fathers set their hearts on securing a first-rate Western schooling for their wayward sons: Narayan failed his matriculation (like Babu in *The Financial Expert*) at the first attempt, whiled away his time at college dreaming (like Chandran in *The Bachelor of Arts*) or making up stories at the back of the class, and lasted barely a week in the teaching post eventually found for him by his father. He had started writing fiction as a means of escape from the career mapped out for him: he began by inventing out of the blue, and with no notion of what was to follow, an imaginary small town—"Malgudi would be a good idea"—where things should happen the way he liked, not as his father chose.

The child Swaminathan in Narayan's first novel, *Swami and Friends*, finds his instinctive resistance, as well as his tactical objections to education, confirmed in scenes of ripe confusion like the scripture lesson which degenerates, in the hands of a master maddened by the heathen ignorance of his class, into vulgar abuse of the Hindu religion ("Did our Jesus go gadding about with dancing girls like your Krishna? Did our Jesus go about stealing butter like that arch-scoundrel Krishna?"). The incident tails

[1] R.K. Narayan's most recent works of fiction are a collection of stories, *Malgudi Days* (1982, Heinemann, £7.50), and a novel, *A Tiger for Malgudi*, published by Heinemann earlier this year, at £7.50. Heinemann has also recently published *R.K. Narayan: A Critical Appreciation* by William Walsh (£7.95).

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off in ignominious violence with an equally exasperated Swami demanding how, if Jesus was a god, he could bring himself to eat fish and flesh and drink wine: "As a brahmin boy it was inconceivable to him that a god should be a non-vegetarian. In answer to this, Ebenezer left his seat, advanced slowly towards Swaminathan, and tried to wrench his left ear off."

The absurdity, triviality and unmistakable truth of episodes like this one are not peculiar to Narayan, whose flavour, here and in the eleven Malgudi novels that followed, reminds the reader irresistibly of Chekhov, partly perhaps because both approach in the same spirit of ironic detachment the same problem of how to cram an unruly, wholly or semi-oriental world into an alien, European art form. Narayan's whole fiction rests at every level on a rich sense of cross purpose: when catastrophe at school finally forces Swami to run away from home, he finds himself lost by night in the Mempi forest, prey to the beasts and demons of mythology—"Now a leopard, now a lion, even a whale, now a huge crowd, a mixed crowd of wild elephants, tigers, lions, and demons, surrounded him. The demons lifted him by his ears, plucked every hair on his head, and peeled off his skin from head to foot"—in a nightmare which modulates into triumph for his team in a school cricket match.

MALGUDI'S STREETS, shops, market stalls and surrounding countryside are permeated at every turn by Western ways of thought (*Frankenstein* and Shirley Temple in *Curly Top* reached Malgudi in the middle '30s, alternating with epics like *Kuchela* at the Palace Talkies), moral principles, attitudes to birth control or tourism, commercial pressures and literary models. Even Western traffic needs are catered for by the demon taxidermist, Vasu, whose jeep becomes a scourge or weapon ("More people will have to die on the roads, if our nation is to develop any road sense at all") in *The Man-Eater of Malgudi*. But retaliation, or rather assimilation and transformation, is also perpetually under way. The harassment and boredom of Swami's schooldays are broken by a single day of glorious revolt when the pupils go on strike in sympathy with the nationalist cause, and more particularly with Indian weavers victimised—rumoured to have had their thumbs cut off by ruthless Manchester mill-owners—for the sake of the imperial export trade: Swami and friends joyfully smash windows, defy their teachers, terrorise smaller and more docile boys, until order is restored by the police—"nefarious agents of the Lancashire thumb-cutters"—and life returns to its mundane round of classroom drudgery.

Since there was in those days no means of publishing a novel in India, *Swami and Friends* landed

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up after doing the rounds of London publishers in 1934 on the desk of Graham Greene, himself then struggling gloomily with the Euston Road and Battersea settings of his own novel, *It's a Battlefield*. Greene was immediately captivated: he and Narayan were born under the same star (Libra) and so, according to the horoscope Narayan later drew for him, fated to be friends. "I was able to find a publisher for *Swami*, and Malgudi was born, the Mempi Forest and Nallappa's Grove, the Albert Mission School, Market Road, the River Sarayu—all that region of the imagination which seems to me now more familiar than Battersea or the Euston Road."

Greene's enthusiasm, generous and constant ("Since the death of Evelyn Waugh, Narayan is the novelist I most admire in the English language"), was if anything sharpened by a distinct trace of professional envy: "Comedy needs a strong framework of social convention with which the author sympathizes but which he does not share", he wrote in a review of *The Financial Expert* in 1952, pointing out that, where "Miss Compton-Burnett" was obliged to fall back on Victorian settings for her characters and "Mr Henry Green" to fit his out with elaborate artificial rules of his own invention, Narayan had the inestimable technical advantage of a social structure as ancient and commodious as it was still vigorous and complex. Its crushing weight and force are disclosed, if only partially and fleetingly, in occasional abortive attempts at escape by disaffected boys like Swami and Babu or, on a more painful, even tragic level, by the desperate flight and still more desperate capitulation of the unhappy and neglected wife in *The Dark Room*. For the most part it provides a stable background against which to examine a vast, shifting, disorderly, at the same time intricately regulated, hierarchical population ranging from the well-heeled and houseproud citizens of fashionable Lawley Extension down through blanket merchants, oilmongers, sweet vendors and itinerant umbrella-menders to the scavengers, sweepers and load-carriers tucked away on the banks of the Sarayu in leaky huts amid the stench of rotting carrion, living in hopes of coming across someone unluckier even than themselves—a derelict dying or preferably dead, since an unclaimed body might be made to yield rich pickings:

> "He saw at the Market Fountain a white sheet covering some object stretched on the pavement. . . . A ragged fellow with matted hair thrust before him a mud tray and said, pointing at the sheet-covered object on the ground, 'An orphan's body, sir. Have pity, help us to bury him.' Margayya threw a look at the covered body, shuddered and parted with a copper, as so many others had done. . . . It made Margayya reflective. People did anything for money. Money was men's greatest need, like air or food. People went to horrifying lengths for its sake, like collecting rent on a dead body: yet this didn't strike Margayya in his present mood as so horrible as something to be marvelled at. It left him admiring the power and dynamism of money, its capacity to make people do strange deeds."

IN ONE SENSE perhaps Elizabethan and Jacobean city comedies, or cony-catching novels, come nearest to Narayan's determination to capture and transfix for the first time the exuberant, obstreperous, macabre and multifarious life of a whole community as yet unmapped in literature. But he does it with Chekhovian subtlety, fearlessness and cunning. The romantic Margayya, brooding so poetically on the magic strength of money, squats under a banyan tree (in *The Financial Expert*), controlling in minutest detail the financial operations of the entire surrounding peasantry; but there is nothing primitive or crude about the consuming, visionary fervour that drives him from his box under the banyan via pornographic publishing (*Bed-Life, or the Science of Marital Happiness*) to dizzy schemes for setting up in single-handed rivalry to the European banking system. For all his tributes to the goddess Lakshmi, and his difficulties with office furniture ("Sitting in a chair, dangling one's legs under a table, seemed an extremely irksome process: it was as if you remained half-suspended in mid-air. . . ."), Margayya's is a universal human passion. Narayan himself once said that it would be perfectly possible to locate Malgudi and its citizenry on the side streets surrounding his New York hotel block; and his readers will all find familiar features in the switchback rise and fall of Margayya's financial fortunes, Swami's rackety schooldays, the horrors of a cold and selfish marriage in *The Dark Room*.

Houses without furniture or plumbing, goddesses who have to be placated for business purposes with red lotus leaves crushed in a grey cow's milk, psychological disturbance curable by incantation and beatings: details like these are, in one sense, neither here nor there to a writer as detached from, at the same time as passionately absorbed by what he sees as Narayan. In another sense they are, of course, the stuff itself of his imaginative vision. His is a contemplative rather than an active, interventionist or shaping art, and he is not concerned with stylistic refinement ("My philosophy of style is that it should not be noticed at all. There should be no barrier between what is said and how it is said"). Perhaps the clearest analogy in the European tradition comes from painting rather than the novel. Narayan's even tone, his clear, functional, almost transparent prose, his lack of emphasis or conventional perspective, all find their technical equiva-

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lents in this description by the painter Bridget Riley (another of Narayan's warmest English admirers) of the way in which the spectator's eye is thrown round one of Monet's glittering, green-blue canvases of leaves and water: "In a sense there is *nothing to look at*; and I suspect it was just that elusive glance that was the central thing, because it was not so much built or made as simply offered him by the circumstances of the day."

IT IS THIS deceptively simple, overall, perceptual technique that enables Narayan again and again to bring off singularly strange effects. He has, as it were, almost imperceptibly changed the rhythm of the English novel. His method is casual, incidental, digressive rather than cumulative in any accepted structural sense. "It isn't to do with divisions and focus", as Riley said of Monet's brushmarks. "It's to do with shifts and frictions." Much the same might be said of the great Sanskrit epics that have meant so much to Narayan. In *Mr Sampath—The Printer of Malgudi*, he describes how Sri Rama, the hero of the *Ramayana*, resting one day in Mempi forest, scratched a line in the sand from which flowed the river Sarayu on a spot which eventually became the site of Malgudi. The vision is credited to the journalist Srinavas, surely the fullest of all the partial self-portraits (starting with the mild, apprehensive and acutely observant Swami) in Narayan's novels. He represents, if not Narayan himself, at any rate Narayan's considered view of the writer's function, role and methods; his rigorously trained powers of observation and no less strict professional detachment are clearly also his creator's. Srinavas puts in much time working on an adaptation of the story of Shiva and Parvathi ("By externalising emotions, by superimposing feelings in the shape of images, he hoped to express very clearly the substance of this episode....") for a film script that sounds, in conception and execution, strikingly like Narayan's account of his own version of the *Mahabharata*:

> "It is a great tale with well-defined characters who talk and act with robustness and zest—heroes and villains, saints and kings, women of beauty, all displaying great human qualities, superhuman endurance, depths of sinister qualities as well as power, satanic hates and intrigues—all presented against an impressive background of ancient royal capitals, forests and mountains."

Subtract the sublime settings, the heroic and regal aspect of the characters, and what remains is something not unlike a blueprint for Malgudi. The change of key is indicated by Srinavas in a passage that might as well apply to his author's characteristically tentative, modest, humorous yet comprehensive aim in the twelve Malgudi novels:

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"If only one could get a comprehensive view of all humanity, one would get a correct view of the world: things being neither particularly wrong nor right, but just balancing themselves. Just the required number of wrongdoers as there are people who deserved wrong deeds, just as many policemen to bring them to their senses, if possible, and just as many wrongdoers again to keep the police employed, and so on and on in an infinite concentric circle."

Or in other words, borrowed from the poet Vyasa, child of a virgin birth who dictated the *Mahabharata* in one hundred thousand stanzas without stopping to the elephant god Ganesha: "As the full moon by shedding soft light helps the buds of the lotus to open, so this Purana by its exposition expands the human intellect. . . ."

From the Eighth Floor of the Tower

The Collected Peter Porter—By ALAN BROWNJOHN

COLLECTED EDITIONS of a well-known poet's work ought to be issued more frequently than they are. As individual volumes of verse appear at intervals, misleading labels are applied, and stick. Summary opinions become entrenched impressions, and it takes devoted research in out-of-print books to discover what a poet is really about. Why are separate volumes of poetry never republished in handy sets, as sets of novels sometimes are? It would be a good way of keeping in touch, better than trying to glean what you can from very recent work appearing in journals and anthologies—perhaps as a new, or young, reader bewildered by a profusion of names. But until such a desirable policy is adopted, we must be content with Collecteds: formidable tomes for those coming fresh to a poet, but a great improvement on not having the poems at all.

One misleading label that soon drops away as you turn the pages of Peter Porter's *Collected Poems*[1] reads "expatriate Australian writer", thereby managing to suggest an uprooted outsider writing somehow at a tangent to English literature and English life. There is a notion that if you come in to the metropolitan centre from, say, the Celtic edges of these islands, you are near enough to it in the first place for the transition to be acceptable, even helpful because you bring a spice of difference from places not *too* remote. But if you come from somewhere far away from England (with the possible exception of New England) you carry too much of a raw colonial culture with you to be able to settle in comfortably.

Porter arrived in 1951 in an England which is still his home today with a much more informed, complex and ironical view of his native Australia than any of this implies. No one could have been less of an ambitious, simplifying settler-in-reverse, coming with the intention of forcing his image upon the town. Porter came loaded with a whole cluster of ironies which he was to carry and refine throughout thirty years of an extreme commitment to the value and seriousness of poetry.

There was the passionate, almost obsessed, admiration of European art—from his first book, *Once Bitten, Twice Bitten*, onwards there was hardly a poem that did not testify to this—and the accompanying, ironical knowledge that it had all rested on conflict and cruelty. Porter celebrates the classical world and its mythology, Europe's libraries and music, the great novels and the great paintings. But Bruckner, in the poem "A Vicious Vignette", writes scores full of pantheism and birdsong and then goes out shooting. In "Soliloquy at Potsdam", Frederick the Great is depicted as liking to think

That in an afternoon of three sonatas
A hundred regiments have marched more miles
Than lie between here and Vienna and not once
Has a man broken step.

There was the irony in the growing realisation that, while art could nevertheless rise above such contradictions and offer a perfect world of its own, it could bring no ultimate personal ease, no solutions to the distress of the self in its experience of unhappiness and pain: "Art meets the world at an awkward/Angle, offering no harmony/Of fact and feeling." Art is not a fiction, least of all a supreme, consoling one. It touches the real at so many points. But while it seems to suggest a way out for "the tactless misery of self", it leaves you to walk back quite unaided into your own unaltered reality. This is not so much an intellectual position as a genuine grief, a grief sharpened constantly by experience and rendered almost unbearable by the personal bereavement recorded in the poems of *The Cost of Seriousness* (1978).

[1] *Collected Poems*. By PETER PORTER. Oxford University Press, £12.50.

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Then there was the ironical conviction (deriving more from the crude puritanism of his forebears than he would have believed) that love, which is overwhelmingly important, can never be perfect, or provide happiness. There is a way out of this irony, into poetry ("Peter was afraid of girls./ Peter is now an irritant for pearls"), but the early poems in which he treats the theme of adolescence stress the obsession and (without self-pity) the hopelessness:

The lascivious miler, the confident three-quarter
Are thick men now with kids and problems.
There is no way back into their wormy Eden,
Ripe with girls, esplanaded with sex,
To stuff myself to sickness and forget
(Taking my chances, my old wounds averted)
The boy with something wrong reading a book....
"Eat Early Earthapples"

And this note enters almost everything he writes later on the subject of "mature" relationships, married love ("Two butterflies are waiting for the pin") and the sexual mores of others. So isn't the art of poetry itself, even when practised with so acute a sense of its limitations as a cure, or substitute for disappointment, sufficiently absorbing?

The trouble here is that the art of music, which Peter Porter is magnificently and intelligently engrossed in, absorbs him more; as does the world of painting:

Pictures stand still and still
Music composes the world, poems set lines.
"Living in a Calm Country"

Poetry punishes, then, requiring you to make statements (unlike, say, those "calculations to a quaver's whisper" which produce the grand gestures and "big tunes" of the operas of a Puccini) which may be questioned, and which you have to stand by. One later poem is called "What I Have Written I Have Written", and begins:

It is the little stone of unhappiness
which I keep with me. I had it as a child
and put it in a drawer. There came
a heap of paper to put beside it,
letters, poems, a brittle dust
of affection, sallowed by memory.

Writing poems is adding to "the songs of the stone", a painful process. But his all-observing eye—his "exacting eye"—compels him to go on looking at, and writing about, both the inner and the external landscapes:

I can gaze from the eighth floor of the tower
Quite unconcernedly, but cannot avoid
Registering a fresco; then think of the intensity
When our looking is done within, the promontory
Of dreaming. . . .
"English Subtitles"

The Prestige Press and the Christmas Bombing, 1972

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So Porter is led back continually, in his latest work as much as in his earlier books, to a real world, full of richness and fascination and horror, which he *must* discourse upon. There are no ways of retreating. It is a world without reassurance and without serenity, apart from occasional moments in the English, the Italian, or even once or twice the Australian countryside; and it is bounded by the greatest irony of all, the awareness of death.

THE LABEL OF "social satire" on the poems in the first three books—*Once Bitten, Twice Bitten* (1961), *Poems Ancient and Modern* (1964) and *A Porter Folio* (1969) can easily be seen to be a gross simplification. It is earned by a number of pieces where the observation is indeed savage and unerring: including "John Marston Advises Anger", "The World of Simon Raven", and the found poem "Pig in the Middle", where Porter neatly hijacks and highlights a passage of *Daily Express* prose. But in fact the early poems are consistently more complex and more inward-looking than the description indicates (and a distinguished batch of them takes a rueful backward look at his own childhood in Australia). Some of these poems are fully as difficult as any in the books that were to follow. The abrasive wit, and the kind of lucid eloquence he was handling with considerable power and resource in a poem like "Sydney Cove, 1788" would often turn intricate and heavily compressed:

Dear Lie, between the trusting chair
And bashful fire, a world enough
(Though schizophrenic air
Divides its real to worn and rare)
Purports to watch; the red cough
Pastilles know the need they share
With mucous, a rage of stuff
Wasted upon a shift of air.
"Too Worn to Wear"

It was sometimes—perhaps there—a question of self-imposed formal restrictions; but only sometimes. It was more a matter of a determined will to grapple with what he calls (in a very good early poem, "What a Lying Lot the Writers Are") "the tearing fingers of the ruck", the assault of banal everyday concerns and disappointments. Music, in a particularly closely-wrought poem in the first book, "Walking on St Cecilia's Day":

still won't make tomorrow other than
Another day of chafing, shaving, sitting still:
Nodules on noses grow, pet cats get killed,
The lush and smooth upstage the scrag and thin.

If the quotidian may be possible to satirise, satirise it. If it is mundane and intractable (and more than a little sinister), write that down and understand it. Even with our post-Freudian view of ourselves we might be able to transcend it, and still create. Philip Larkin's "struggle to transcend the thought of dying" (in his poem "The Building") is embodied in a National Health hospital. Porter's similar struggle is to make the very different structure of poetry carry, and make endurable, the seedy stuff of the ordinary urban world he inhabits.

The poetry could easily have been successfully lucid, sardonic and witty all the time: Porter can, when he chooses, be epigrammatic, scabrous and very funny—all three in his haiku, and in his jokes and bagatelles. But he has chosen instead, throughout his work, to pitch the poetry on many other levels on the scale between aphorism and the grand, patrician manner. In the next three books he published, all in the 1970s, one is aware of the serious gamble he has undertaken. There is an immense—and calculated—variety of forms, but also a sense of unyielding compression about the writing, only too evident in poems such as "The Storm" (*Living in a Calm Country*, 1975), "Europe: An Ode" (from *The Last of England*, 1970) and "In the Giving Vein" (from *Preaching to the Converted*, 1972):

No pressure on my chest and yet I'm not
In the giving vein. I have about me
Those moveables of eyes that dreams
Have sanctified. The weather is dull, no mist,
The lake is flowing in the wrong direction,
Early to work and the postman with
Words that fall down if they're leaned on.

The tensions of living—"the ingredients are myself"—seem to have been both allegorised and obscured. There is a formal grandeur of style, an attempt to convert personal dread into art; but the

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diction and the imagery tend to become elliptic, impacted.

ALL THE SAME, there are many poems in the books from this period which are clear, and moving, and take up the characteristic Porter concerns with wit and directness; some of them are among his best-known: "A Consumer's Report" (on life itself), "Applause for Death", "Sex and the Over Forties", "An American Military Cemetery in Tuscany", "Cat's Fugue." The one called "Seaside Report" is a key statement of Porter's views on traditional England. The colonial has returned for experiences he can only find ambivalent. Standing near a statue of Queen Victoria at Eastbourne, or Worthing, or Torquay, he reflects that "the polemic here is death", and for a moment sees:

> *Nothing but the calm*
> *of history dying, the beautiful*
> *vulgarization of decay—*
> *Empire gone, the pensioner*
> *will ask for a single stick of gladiolus*
> *in a laughing shop.*

The more personal poems of the 1970s can be movingly candid in the best sense (not the worst, which he believes to be the "confessional"), like "The Sadness of the Creatures":

> *the picture of a lit room*
> *where two people not disposed*
> *to quarrel have met so*
> *oblique a slant of the dark*
> *they can find no words for*
> *their appalled hurt but only*
> *ride the rearing greyness*

—or exuberantly alarming like "Affair of the Heart" ("I'll squeal in fear at her feet—Oh stay with me/I'll plead—look, the twentieth century/is darkening like a window.") And something like "Dream Restaurant" is a surprising reminder that Porter, always excellent on the theme of nightmare, can employ his own kind of surrealism in the service of terror more effectively than most overtly surrealist writers. "Mort Aux Chats" ("Why should they insist on their own/language and religion, who/needs to purr to make his point?/ Death to all cats! The Rule/of Dogs shall last a thousand years!") is a more forceful satire than many of the earlier ones. And alongside *Preaching to the Converted*, which contains these poems, was published *After Martial*, skilful versions and conversions of the Roman satirist which are among the best translations of recent years.

The clarity of the best poems he produced in the early 1970s leads directly to the ceremonious, grieving lucidity of the poems about the tragic death of his wife in Porter's latest two volumes,

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The Cost of Seriousness (1978) and *English Subtitles* (1981). The simpler power of these seems to have been reached through the long struggle to control the profusion of possibilities so apparent in the earlier work. Some of these well-known poems are the finest he has ever written: "The Easiest Room in Hell", "An Angel in Blythburgh Church", "An Exequy", "Roman Incident", "What I Have Written I Have Written", "The Future." But from the bitter seriousness of this writing he can also step aside into the satirical excursions of "Nights at the Opera", or the ironical "transportations" of Gertrude Stein to Snails Bay ("I am Miss Stein/ and this bay is mine/I am Miss Stein (pronounced Steen)/and this sea is green") and the distanced appraisal of "How Important is Sex?":

Not very. Even if it plays a not
Inconsiderable part in misery,
You can be unhappy without a reference
To its intervention or its absence.

Our researchers have discovered even
Species whose reproductive processess
Are quite unsexual—and usually these
Are the more efficient and uncomplicated.

In "The Unfortunate Isles" he gathers in, and focuses with a new ability to grip and move the attentive reader, several of the most important of his themes. The allegory he devises here gives him the opportunity to use something of a narrative line, always a strength in the poems where he employs it. This is a poem about "the wreck of self" on the reefs of middle age and age. The conclusion is a measured and an eloquent statement of despair:

there stands
The Principality of Childhood reduced
to a crumpled letter, there a rain tank
rusting into canna flowers which marks
the courtliness of love. Nobody weeps here
for what he's lost, since everything is home.
Each is a creature calming himself
with more anxiety. The prevailing wind
blows memory in your face, and up the beach
the harmonies of death return to breed.

The story-line of "The Unfortunate Isles", which is the penultimate poem in *English Subtitles*, involves a return to a distant colony: humankind left on the shoals of disappointment by time, the poet himself cast back to the place where it all began.

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WHAT HAS PORTER ACHIEVED, what has English poetry gained, in the intervening journey of thirty years through the culture and politics of England and Europe, through travel, through love and marriage and bereavement? While we have no collected editions from several other important figures on the scene, comparative judgment must be deferred. But meanwhile, the Porter *Collected* is currently the best volume of its kind, the most substantial and impressive one, since those of Auden, MacNeice and Roy Fuller.

It is a less approachable *opus* than theirs. Porter stands to Auden rather as Michael Tippett stands to Benjamin Britten: lacking the sheer range, technical adroitness and felicity of his inventions, yet possessing an emotional and intellectual force which takes hold on the imagination more gradually, and finally seems compelling and memorable. Fashion has treated Porter variably; but then the metropolitan literary universe to which some would consign him is really an unfortunate isle itself, surrounded by oceans infested with syllabuses and grudging prejudices. Although one famous poem, "Your Attention Please", has been taken up by a rock group, he is not very widely studied and quoted; a steady groundswell of interest among readers here and abroad may alter that.

His poetry is a poetry of harsh intelligence, and unswerving responsibility to the standards of the art. The 300 pages of the *Collected* offer something for which we should be grateful: writing which is honestly and searchingly addressed to the major concerns of art and civilisation in our time. It is a book for anyone who cares for, and about, English poetry in the post-War years.

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POINTS OF THE COMPASS

Letter from Argentina

The Lost Country

By James Neilson

TOWARDS THE end of May Argentines learned, with resignation rather than surprise, that they had just come within two minutes of war over some bedraggled islands in the South Atlantic. On this occasion the islands in question were not the Falklands, but three unprepossessing outcrops in the mouth of the Beagle Channel called Lennox, Picton, and Nueva; and the prospective enemy was not Great Britain but Chile. The incident, which occurred when a malfunctioning Argentine helicopter strayed across the frontier, thrilled a few nationalists and alarmed a great many other people. But, although the danger of a war with Chile remains considerable, it was quickly forgotten.

Argentines have been sated with bad news for so long that it now takes much more than the possibility of a mere war to move them. Hardly a week goes by without them being confronted by some new and quite appalling revelation of military wrongdoing or some additional evidence that their economy is doomed to collapse in the not very distant future. They are, in consequence, apprehensive and bewildered and feel that they are trapped in a maelstrom, rushing towards an unknown, but surely unpleasant, destination. Few really try to make sense of the chaotic flux that is sweeping them along. And the analyses of those who do are so divergent, and so pessimistic, that they merely intensify the mood of grim foreboding that seems to have overcome the entire nation.

For example, one of the country's best-known columnists, Jesus Iglesias Rouco of *La Prensa*, is convinced that Argentina is heading for what he calls "Lebanonisation", a state of affairs in which rival armies prowl the land, seizing parts of it and holding the inhabitants hostage. A lucid conservative like Emilio Hardoy says that an age is coming to an end. Alvaro Alsogaray, Argentina's most persuasive advocate of free-market economic policies, recently warned his fellow countrymen that before long they might fall under "an iron hand, probably of communist extraction." The country's most prominent politician, the Radical Raúl Alfosín, however, thinks that the iron hand will be fascist.

The diversity of opinions concerning Argentina's likely fate is accompanied by a similar diversity of views concerning the reasons for its plight. These, naturally enough, reflect the political attitudes of the people expressing them. Dedicated anti-Peronists pin the blame for every setback on the late General Juan Domingo Perón who, together with his second wife Evita, established a "corporate" state dominated by organised "sectors" (the most powerful of which are the armed forces and the labour unions), which has resisted all attempts to dismantle it since Perón's overthrow in 1955. Peronists, and many leftwingers, deny this vehemently. They insist that Argentina's troubles are the work of the CIA or the Trilateral Commission which, they say, have always manipulated its soldiers and businessmen in order to achieve their aim of transforming the country into a gigantic agricultural reserve without any industry that could disturb the sleep of the plutocrats in Detroit, Manchester, or Osaka.

These conspiratorial explanations, repeated knowingly day in and day out by respected politicians and journalists, may contribute as little to our understanding of the Argentine situation as the apocalyptic predictions of the commentators. But they do tell us quite a lot about the Argentine ruling class or "establishment", the network of military officers, labour union leaders, politicians and others, who quarrel ferociously among themselves but nonetheless know one another, take one another's behaviour for granted, and, whether they like it or not, support a political order that has proven to be extremely resilient.

ALTHOUGH, ON THE SURFACE, Argentina has always seemed to be a flamboyantly unstable society, it has demonstrated an astonishing capacity for resisting change. Despite the superficial theatricals of military coups which are described by their authors as "revolutions" and the sporadic irruptions of such noisy mass movements as Peronism, Argentina possesses a durable political order which up to now has worked in a fairly predictable way, with military régimes supposedly devoted to capital formation alternating regularly with popu-

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list governments bent on distributing whatever is available to whomever their leaders think deserves it.

This arrangement, privately admitted though publicly deplored, has, like the democratic system in other lands, its own underlying rhythm, its own dynamic; and it enables power to be shifted backwards and forwards between two accepted alternatives in a passably regular, and rarely very painful, fashion. By the time a military régime had become unpopular, a civilian government—to be legitimised by elections, not by a coup—was ready and waiting to take over; and by the time its failure to satisfy expectations had become manifest, a consensus had formed to the effect that what Argentina needed was a spell of stern military rule to restore order and get business moving again. Thus, although some Argentines were always disgruntled, more were always investing their hopes in the civilian or military government they could see approaching.

But now, thanks in large measure to the merciless "struggle against subversion" waged by the armed forces in the second half of the 1970s, the system has broken down. The military officers cannot, as they did so often in the past, withdraw to their barracks and let the civilians try their hand at "democracy" for a while. If they did, they would find themselves ordered to appear in court and explain to hostile judges what they did to the 10–30,000 people—significantly, nobody knows the real figure—who were kidnapped, tortured, and murdered during what is now universally known as "the dirty war." During this anarchic period, moreover, some officers took advantage of the prevailing confusion and fear to settle old scores with personal enemies, inconvenient business partners, and amatory rivals. There are, in addition, large numbers of charges of corruption flying around, although the people making them still tend to avoid saying precisely whom they think stole the money involved.

THE MILITARY CHIEFS are utterly determined to prevent the courts from investigating the fate of "the disappeared" because they know that this would quickly lead to the dismantling of the armed forces. It was not, after all, as though the atrocities had been committed by a few fanatics or sadists. The brutal tactics adopted by the military had all been devised and approved by the senior commanders, and were enshrined in written documents as "doctrine." The men who actually tortured and killed were simply following orders from above, and they have let it be known that they can prove this. There was, moreover, no Argentine equivalent of the *SS* whose "excesses" could be deplored and disowned by the equivalent of the *Wehrmacht*. From the beginning the military chiefs did their best to ensure that as many units as possible would be involved in their repressive activities in order to prevent their forces dividing into parts which had much blood on their hands and parts which were relatively clean. Responsibility for the crimes of "the dirty war" is, the military chiefs proclaim, in consequence institutional.

The ideologues of the military régime always appreciated that, because of "the dirty war", there could be no going back, that they had burnt their boats. But this did not alarm them. They thought that the principal error of previous military régimes had been to give up too easily, so if a reluctance to face civilian justice helped put some steel in the military backbone, so much the better. They also assumed that the *process*, as they called their government, would succeed; that Argentines, freed from the terrorist plague, would be richer and happier, and that the military government would have little difficulty in retaining power for a generation and would then be able to bequeath it to a conservative political movement of their own creation.

THE "PROCESS" RÉGIME proved as incapable of changing the rhythms of Argentine politics as those that preceded it, and before long public approbation turned into public distaste—the economic "miracle" of the first years was seen to be a sorry fraud, and the military chiefs began to realise that the time was coming when they ought to leave. Had it not been for "the dirty war" they would have done so years ago and the Falklands War, among many other things, would never have taken place. But, caught in a trap of their own making, they have been forced to stay in power even though their authority, and with it their ability to rule, has eroded rapidly.

Most of their actions since 1981 have been determined by their need to persuade the civilian population in general, and opposition politicians and human rights activists in particular to overlook "the dirty war." When the first "process" president, General Jorge Rafael Videla, finished his term he was replaced by his friend General Roberta Viola, who promptly tried to knit together a political coalition that would have included some friendly Peronists. His efforts, overshadowed by a developing economic crisis, alarmed right-wingers like General Leopoldo Fortunato Galtieri, so they removed him and put Galtieri in his place. Galtieri, a man with a more grandiose outlook than Viola, dreamed of restoring military prestige, and thus silencing demands for a full investigation of "the dirty war", through a spectacular *coup de main* in the Falklands, which have for years been the focus of the national cult of total sovereignty. When this

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failed too, Galtieri fell and his successors (led by the new army commander-in-chief General Cristino Nicolaides and his president, General Reynaldo Bignone) tried a new tack: Argentines could have the civilian democracy they obviously craved but would first have to agree to a number of conditions, principally a commitment not to pry into "the dirty war."

By then Argentine public opinion, contemptuous of the military after the Falklands débâcle, hurt by the swift drop in the standard of living, and frustrated by the excessively long suspension of civil liberties, was in no mood to make any kind of deal with the military. The political leaders turned that military offer down flat. A few months later the military tried again, issuing what they said was their "final statement" on "the dirty war", in which, after justifying it by describing the crimes of the terrorists and the threat they had presented, it was announced that henceforward only God and History would be allowed to sit in judgment over military actions.

This desperate attempt to end a chapter was rejected with derision not just by Argentines but by foreign leaders, including the Italian President, Sandro Petrini, who took exception to its "chilling cynicism", Pope John Paul II, the European Parliament, and the governments of Spain, West Germany, France and Sweden. The military decision to dictate an "amnesty" that would benefit themselves has also been fiercely attacked by Argentine and foreign leaders.

So THE "HUMAN RIGHTS PROBLEM" remains unsolved and it looks insoluble. If the big civilian political parties agree to let the military get away scot-free, they will discredit themselves and abdicate many of their constitutional prerogatives. If they do not, they will find themselves involved in a confrontation with the armed forces —which will either rebel as a whole or tacitly encourage individual officers to conduct a campaign of intimidation impressive enough to cow civilian leaders into silence.

EVEN IF "THE DIRTY WAR" had never occurred, the chances of democracy flourishing on Argentine soil in the foreseeable future would not be very good. The biggest civilian political movement, Peronism, is authoritarian by tradition and temperament and has as little respect for the constitutional niceties as the military themselves. The Peronists demonstrated this during their first period in power between 1946 and 1955, then between 1973 and 1976; they are demonstrating it again during the desultory election campaign that is still in progress and, barring mishaps, should culminate when the polling booths are open on October 30. The Peronists seem to enjoy the support of at least 40% of the electorate, and take it for granted that they will romp to power in any fair elections. But in Argentina the president and vice-president are chosen not by direct vote in a first-past-the-post system but by an Electoral College. The Peronists fear, with good reason, that the representatives of the other 60% or so of the voting population will combine against them and cheat them of the victory they believe is theirs by right. So they have been virulently denouncing the electoral system—the constitutional one, as it happens—and threaten civil war if they are thwarted. Some Peronist leaders, moreover, have been busily negotiating with senior army officers in an attempt to work out a secret alliance that will, in exchange for giving the military the protection from prosecution they want, provide the Peronists with military backing whenever they should need it.

When Juan Domingo Perón went to his grave in 1974 it was widely assumed that his movement would quickly follow him. That it has not done so is largely the fault of the military régime, which removed the dithering Isabel Perón from Government House in March 1976, and overnight transformed the Peronists from villains into martyrs. As long as it is in opposition and is under no obligation to make any clear-cut decisions, the Peronist movement is able to stick together—Maoists manage to coexist with Hitlerians, socialists with crusty old Tories, and moderates with thugs. But in power Peronism, bereft of its one unifying factor, Juan Perón, is bound to fall apart as it did in 1975, provoking a frantic struggle for key positions among the leaders of the disparate factions that compose it. In the past this struggle has generally been won by the movement's least reputable elements, individuals who prefer force to persuasion. Nothing that has happened in the last few months suggests that this is about to change.

PERONISM, IN THE WORDS of one of its leading moderates, Antonio Cafiero, is a national movement which aspires to absorb all "sectors" and all political expressions of Argentine life. When pressed for a snappy definition of their movement, Peronists are usually reduced to saying: "*Peronism is Argentina . . . Peronism is the people . . . Peronism is social justice.*" Beyond this they cannot go because, apart from the difficulties involved in summing up a movement that contrives to be all things to all men, any answer that is too specific will also be divisive, infuriating those Peronists who have a very different idea of the movement's secret essence.

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If Peronism seems to be an impossible option, what about Radicalism? This is the country's second largest political movement, and enjoys the support, the polls indicate, of between 25 to 30% of the electorate. Unlike the Peronists, the Radicals are genuine democrats who respect the law and the Constitution even when it stands in their way, and their leaders, men like Alfonsín and Fernando de la Rúa, are competent men. Nobody, however, thinks that even if by some miracle they did manage to win office, they would be able to handle either the military or the Peronists—let alone both of them together.

Military determination to defend accumulated privileges and the Peronists' belief that they are the only genuine expression of the Argentine will and therefore entitled to rule would seem enough to be getting on with, but the Radicals would also have to tackle Argentina's monstrous economic crisis. The inflation rate has recently been running at 400% a year, moving higher as the military régime's ability to impose discipline has diminished. The foreign debt, at 40 billion dollars a year (helped by military spending of, it is said, 15 billion dollars in the last two years alone) is in present circumstances unpayable. The government's income from taxation has been dropping fast, Argentines being unable or unwilling to attend to its needs any longer.

Living standards continue to fall, and the labour unions, dominated by Peronists, are in a very angry mood. Radical leaders, like most others, pretend that they will be able to handle this mess without reducing the overall standard of living still further, or causing politically intolerable hardship for anyone. But nobody elsewhere has yet discovered a painless cure for inflation and, if anyone ever does, he is unlikely to be an Argentine politician. Sooner rather than later, living standards seem bound to collapse, provoking riots and panic, and quite possibly enabling the extreme left, which has been industriously working away at shop-floor level, to achieve its cherished dream of organising a "Revolutionary General Strike."

Is Argentina drifting towards a real revolution that would destroy its worn-out traditional political system and substitute something else?

Even the gloomiest Cassandras, for all their willingness to prophesy catastrophe, cannot quite bring themselves to believe this. But then few of the inhabitants of Czar Nicholas's Russia or the Shah's Iran were convinced, until it was too late, that the familiar order which had survived so many vicissitudes would one day crumble into dust. In retrospect, the omens were evident: the ruling class was not merely despised by the ruled for its incompetence and corruption, it had come to despise itself and this corroded its morale, its willingness to resist those who would consign it to the scrap-heap of history. Although the survivors' memories were inevitably affected by what came later, many described the brooding, distraught atmosphere that pervaded every cranny of their world. If the literature is anything to go by, the similarity between the mood of Argentines, especially of those accustomed to play some part in public affairs, and that of the Russian bourgeoisie or aristocracy three-quarters of a century ago, is considerable. They have lost faith in themselves, in their ability to steer events; like prisoners of an unpredictable tyrant, they wait nervously to see what will happen.

Argentines have always been vulnerable to bouts of euphoria that are soon followed by periods of utter despair. Now, like the doomed élites of countries later afflicted by revolution, the ruling class has wilfully cut itself away from reality and retreated to contemplate its own self-indulgent fantasies. As a collective entity it displays in abundance symptoms that in an individual would announce an imminent mental breakdown. Needless to say, the fantasies vary in accordance with political preference, but most of them involve the paranoid suspicion that the country is a hapless victim of obscure foreign plots, with events determined by what many call a "black hand." There is also, in most circles, a refusal to accept natural limitations: military officers and government spokesmen often speak as though Argentina had won the war against Great Britain; and most civilian politicians insist that prosperity would return if only wages were "restored" by decree to their "historic levels", twice as high as today's. All this suggests that Argentina's élite has become more than slightly deranged, certainly unable to cope with the difficulties besieging it and, of course, the rest of the country.

The decay of Argentina's ruling class, which began long before the armed forces took power, to loud applause, in 1976, has been paralleled by the decay of Argentina as an organised community. The three armed forces are divided into factions and lodges and secret cabals, which hug to themselves their separate schemes for national regeneration. They are also divided horizontally, with the lower-ranking officers deploring the incompetence and corruption and lack of patriotic fibre of their seniors. The political parties are likewise divided, as are the labour unions and professional associations, and so on right down to sports clubs and families.

These divisions are far deeper than the differences that are taken for granted in any pluralistic society. They are often irreconcilable and serve to

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paralyse rather than invigorate. Millions of individuals have reacted to the prevailing anarchy by retreating into their private lives, concerning themselves with their families and their friends, and nothing else. Military chiefs and political leaders, appreciating the dangers inherent in such "dissociation", have campaigned in favour of more "participation" and bemoaned the general apathy; but to little effect. Many young Argentines have tried very hard to respond but, frustrated by the sheer number of purportedly representative organisations and by the limpet-like determination of their present leaders to maintain their positions, most have given up the attempt and returned to their own affairs; or, if they are enterprising and think they have marketable skills, have emigrated.

ARGENTINES ARE BY NATURE an energetic, innovative, and talented people; if they were well governed, they would have little difficulty in building a flourishing society. But for decades they have been ruled by individuals whose ability to win power bears no relationship to the capacity to use it wisely and well.

No doubt the man in the street must share part of the blame for allowing such a *kakistocracy*, a government of the worst, to entrench itself. The reasons why this has happened are, of course, complex, and it is only fair to point out that other countries which have tried to industrialise rapidly —Germany, Italy, Japan—have all gone through periods in which demagogic thugs managed not only to seize power but to capture the imaginations of many of their fellow citizens as well. Germany, Italy, and Japan were defeated in war and occupied by the victors, who enforced changes which they thought would be positive and which were later accepted by their beneficiaries. But Argentina has never been defeated in such a conclusive fashion, let alone occupied by a democracy; so its old order has managed to remain.

How much longer it will succeed in doing so is, however, an open question. If the rot continues, a moment will surely arrive when the sorely tried population of the country will turn its back on its civilian leadership as rudely as it has turned its back on the armed forces, and welcome virtually any alternative as long as it looks sufficiently different.

Most revolutions have been preceded by the disgrace of a ruling class that was too ostentatiously greedy and incompetent at home, and unable to conduct a successful war—or some political equivalent of war—against foreigners. Incapable of performing its basic functions, it became irrelevant. Then, sometimes years after this has become obvious, its authority finally collapses and it tries to make peace with opposition leaders it once jailed or exiled—because, despite everything, they seem comfortingly moderate. By then these opposition leaders, who have coexisted for years with the *ancien régime*, have become identified with it in the public mind and they too are rejected in favour of other, previously unknown leaders, who seem to have no doubts about what they want.

Argentina has not reached this revolutionary stage as yet. The discredited military régime is preparing to pass power to traditional politicians who are still regarded, although with little enthusiasm, as the natural recipients. Should the Radicals and Peronists falter, as their performance in the past and the magnitude of the difficulties they will have to face suggest is probable, Argentina could all too easily start to slide into an upheaval which few really want but an increasing number sense is rapidly approaching.

Boredom

This winter the ice
tightens the lake
six inches thick.

You walk across the water
waving to me like
a woman lost awake

from a dream in a lonely hotel.
How I love you! I'd write a poem about it
but the very thought of it leaves me cold.

Michael Hulse

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IN THE MARGIN

Living with an Insult in a Mind-Free Zone

By Melvin J. Lasky

Accent Grave

London

THE FAULT lies possibly in the stars, but more probably in Alsace. In the last winter of the War when there appeared to be a stalemate on the whole German front, the Allied troops dug themselves in on this side of the Rhine, and I along with them. Some of us were able to get out of our dreary headquarters, in my case the *casernes* in Colmar, Strasbourg and Luneville, and find billets with some friendly family in town. And there, at the hearths of Alsace Lorraine, came the fateful dividing line among troops who carried books in their knapsacks—those who looked back to Paris and practised their imperfect French, those who looked forward to Berlin and improved their bad German; in either case the accents, therewith taken on, would prove to be incorrigible. The Paris clan busied itself with little paperbacks of Proust and prepared for yet another exciting era of expatriation; the Berlin group (in which, excepting the old German anti-Nazi *émigrés* and exiles-in-uniform, I was in a minority of one or two) felt quite another post-War future in their bones. With perhaps no less romanticism we persuaded ourselves that this time the action would not be on the Left Bank of the Seine but, rather, on the right bank of the Spree. Armed thus with a heavy Alsatian accent (only slightly relieved by the thought that Goethe had, after all, studied in what the Germans then still called Strassburg) we rolled onwards to the ruins of the *Reichshauptstadt*.

As it turned out there was indeed "action" along the Spree. The Anglo-Americans who lingered on along the *rive gauche* did not turn out to be a new generation of Hemingways, Scott Fitzgeralds, and other heroes of literary nostalgia. At least in Berlin there was the real "commitment" or *engagement* with the world's political troubles which in Paris was mere ideological pretence. When I visited my old friends from the Luneville *caserne*, now temporarily ensconced in the Parisian *quartier Latin*, they were still stuck with their bad French; the natives did not take kindly to grating foreign accents: and I returned for a decade to Berlin where the natives, flatteringly polite to all Western conquerors who deigned to say a few fraternising words, encouraged one to chatter on.

SO IT WAS THAT I found myself in Frankfurt-am-Main the other day, almost 40 years on, still trying to make myself understood despite misplaced umlauts and *plattdeutsche* syllable-swallowing, and not succeeding nearly as well as in the good old fraternal days. The 1980s were not the 1940s, and the differences were not merely chronological. The audiences seem strangely unsympathetic, and the themes one gets set these days—"Why do we still need America? . . . How long will real German interests continue to be neglected? . . . When will the Western arms race stop threatening us with nuclear destruction? . . ."—appear to be put provocatively as ideological traps. Accent or no, I found it increasingly difficult to get even the simplest point across. Either they did not want to hear or wilfully misheard. Otherwise how could I ever be accused—by a no less keen-witted chap than Ivan Illich, the Austrian Jesuit brimming with dialectical wisdom from his camps in the poor Mexican villages —of being some kind of neo-Hitlerite, a left-over anti-Semite who was longing for a second Holocaust?

HE HURLED these nasty charges at me last Sunday, in booming orotund sentences artfully delivered with pregnant pauses. A lone dissenting voice in the back of the audience heckled Illich rudely: "You're talking like a Hitler yourself! . . ." The Frankfurt audience was outraged. The chairperson demanded an apology for Illich. I vainly tried to get a little apology for myself as a supplementary. Even more hopeless was the attempt to restate what I had been trying to say; evidently my short un-Teutonic sentences were complicating and confusing the matter even more. I was pronounced guilty of holding the "most vicious" (*niederträchtige*) views which Pater Ivan Illich, in all his catholic inter-

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continental experience, from Vienna to Cuernavaca, had "ever heard."[1]

Grand Illusions

Frankfurt-am-Main

BUT THEN I wonder if my point would have been very much more persuasive, or even clear, if I had put it in English, so out of joint are these times among our professional intellectuals.

The basic disorientation, especially here among the West German Left, is over the concept of "Cold War" and the meaning of "anti-Communism." Both phrases have become dirty words, easy-to-mouth ideological obscenities among the 1968 generation; but, surely, one must take the language of history more seriously than that. The choices for a person of some thought and moral feeling are, after all, rather simple. One could be in favour of Communism. Or one could be non-political or a-politically indifferent to it. Or one could be against it. I am afraid that exhausts the logical possibilities.

This, for the vast army of late stone-age Marxists in Frankfurt, misled by the dialectical enlightenment of the local Adorno-Horkheimer school of scholastics, was evidently too simple-minded and lacked appropriate underpinnings in necessary "social theory." (Eric Hobsbawm, sitting to my right on the *Römerberg* platform, quickly read me out of his exclusive trade union of "genuine intellectuals.") Accordingly I went on to ask a further question concerning the moral, political, cultural and historical content of "anti-Communism", of opposition to a totalitarian system of the Left which has failed to achieve either the welfare or the freedom it once offered as its revolutionary ideals. One could oppose it, as so many Polish members of *Solidarity* did (and still do) because it denies free trade unions; or as the Pope and Solzhenitsyn do, because it prevents a free choice of religious life; or as Boris Pasternak did, because it censors literature and harasses independent writers. And the people, the nameless "toiling masses", are against Communism because it doesn't allow them to be just that—useful, profitably rewarded, successful toilers: to get themselves and their families up out of poverty, to be able to enjoy the fruits of their own labour. . . .

One could (*and I did, fatefully*) go further. William Randolph Hearst—and his later, equally ignorant disciple Joe McCarthy—was against it because it represented something for him which he vaguely hated as "godless materialism"; and Oswald Spengler was against it because it embodied the evil of "mass man" degenerated by the "Slav soul." Needless to add (*but I, perhaps foolishly, added it*) there was also the author of *Mein Kampf*—the authentic Landsberg, not the pseudo-*Stern*, version—who fought a Satanic phenomenon which he saw emanating from something he imagined to be *"Judaeo-Bolshevismus."* Thus, "anti-fascists" could be—and were throughout most, but not all, of World War II—Communists; like the Red Army they helped to "win the war", and to despoil the peace. And there is no point denying that from time to time in the ranks of anti-Communists there are unwelcome, or unsavoury, forces who prefer to be the partisans of a Goebbelsian fanaticism, or a Khomeini dogmatism, or a Somoza tyranny.

In other words (*but, I am afraid, the words were already falling on deaf ears*), one can oppose a political and historic evil haphazardly or coherently, delusively or realistically, with conventional and ambiguous prejudices or informed standards, in the name of an ideal good and its pragmatic benefits or on behalf of an alternative evil and its own implicit miseries. For one must recognise (*no chance of that: the storm was about to break*) that anti-Communism, not unlike anti-Nazism, is fed from the same variety of human motivations, embracing politics, economics, culture, moral and religious values, as well as a dark conglomeration of antipathies for something strange, foreign, and alien, something almost indefinably hateful. Simple labels, like "anti-Communist" or "anti-Fascist", are often necessary in the conflict of historical forces; but let us remember that they do not by themselves clarify what it is one is opposing, or what it is one is proposing.

Still, I went on to argue and insist—without (*vain hope*) burdening listeners with metaphysics—that the true negation of an evil has as its positive essential content the positing of an implicit good. A consistent anti-totalitarianism implies a constitution of liberty; and it seemed to me to be the badge of honour of the devotees of freedom, and the defenders of free peoples and nations.

MY ORIGINAL PRIVATE WORRY, before mounting the platform of the *Römerberg-Gespraeche*—that all this might be a shade too elementary for the remnants of the Frankfurt School—was wildly misplaced. These were fine distinctions far beyond the dreams of dogmatism, or "Critical Social Theory." The new German ideology takes as its motto, quoted interminably at me, a remark by that wooliest of "unpolitical" thinkers, Thomas Mann, to the effect that anti-Communism is the grand

[1] At a subsequent conference in Vienna I happened to be seated at lunch next to Cardinal Koenig; and when I broached the subject of the controversial Ivan Illich he appeared to be very contrite indeed. Illich had been a student of his at his Salzburg seminary. I hinted to him that this must be quite the first time I had ever taken a "confession" from a high Catholic theologian. The Cardinal smiled serenely.

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stupidity (*die Grundthorheit*) of the 20th century. The main enemy being at home—despicable capitalism with its boring bourgeoisified society, sinisterly Americanised in song, spirit, and weaponry—all species of anti-Communism are diversionary and must be put down as the accursed heritage of the Third *Reich*.

A handsome silver-haired lady, Dr Hildegard Hamm-Brücher, who happened to be a Cabinet Minister in the last liberal-left Bonn government, seemed to be deeply wounded by the suggestion that a democrat had necessarily to be an anti-Communist. She had lived through the Third Reich herself, and as a schoolgirl she had been "ruthlessly indoctrinated with such sentiments"; she no longer wanted any part of them; they were "all part and parcel of Hitlerism." This gave Pater Illich his opportunity to hurl his interdiction and excommunication. Celebrated for his programmes of de-schooling, de-medicinising, and de-industrialising our unclean societies, he heatedly seized his polemical opportunity to try and de-Nazify me.

If it weren't a moment of low Kafkaesque grotesquerie it might have been a scene of high *Schweik* comedy. I should have felt, *mutatis mutandis*, like those post-War Germans who looked for what were called in those days *Persil-Scheine*, some transparent excuses for white-wash and self-exculpation—but please, sir, I was a victor, a conqueror of the *Führer*, a liberator at Dachau . . . ! What was there really left to say? None are so deaf as they who will not hear.

My last quixotic effort was to try and argue with Frau Dr Hamm-Brücher's old wounds. As a "Nazified schoolgirl" she must have been taught to hate the Communists because they were all Jews and all *Untermenschen*, fit only for slave labour or extermination. Now, as a good post-War German, impeccably anti-Nazi, she must surely recognise that one's legitimate objections to Soviet totalitarianism are based on the very opposite principles—namely, that the Kremlin is shamefully racist and anti-Semitic, and exploits the whole of its own people as slave labour; that the Western hope is that all Russians should and would come to enjoy basic human rights. When did Goebbels ever indict Communism for instituting a *police state*, based on a *one-party system*, with *censorship* for all writers and *concentration-camps* for dissidents? Wasn't it obvious that a "Nazi anti-Communism", in so doing, would only be refuting itself? A totalitarian tyranny of the Right could not . . . and did not, in point of historic fact—oppose *in principle* a totalitarian tyranny of the Left.

But by that time I was left talking only to myself. I departed utterly chastened, blaming with quiet desperation my faulty accent, my abbreviated sentence structure, in the end, even my ill-advised confrontation with a new German ideology which—as one commentator in a Bonn newspaper (Rudolph Krämer-Badoni in *Die Welt*) put it the next day—has so hardened in the two decades since the "radicalised intelligentsia of the 1960s" into a dogmatic conformity that it remains open only to a *dialogue des sourdes*.

Tale of Two Periods

Berlin

Here, in West Berlin, the ideological sclerosis hardens even more than in Frankfurt-am-Main. Once (and not so long ago) the city was prized, even in its amputated form, as "the health of the state"; for here rather than in the West German Republic did one find that wise old Central European variation that things were serious but not hopeless. Both Kennedy and Koestler felt themselves in the bracing local atmosphere to be "Berliners" here. Since those years the half-city, in addition to its physical handicaps, has been spiritually ailing: "identity crisis" would be the mildest term for its inner disorientation. What has gone wrong?

Looking back on these almost four post-War decades I am tempted to divide that whole historic period from the old ruins of Hitler's *Reichshauptstadt* in 1945 to the new anxieties of the present day into two periods: and they appear to me to be dramatically, fundamentally, tragically different.

The first period—which takes in the late 1940s, the '50s, and the early '60s—is still, I think, not sufficiently appreciated as one of the great periods of European history and Western civilisation: the magnificent recovery of the Old World, aided by the New World, out of the rubble of the most fratricidal war in the annals of mankind. There were moments when it was hard to believe that men and women could learn to hope again, could feel it was worthwhile to reconstruct, could find new ways of living together in a Western form of cooperation, reasonableness and toleration which so much of the recent past had murderously denied. For many of us, at least personally for me—having opted for "the west bank of the Spree" I was then living in Berlin—it was symbolised by the phrase of the unforgettable *Oberbürgermeister* Ernst Reuter: "the miracle of Berlin (*das Wunder Berlins*). . . ." And by that he meant something unexpected and even paradoxical, namely, that a city and a population which had been battered, corrupted, and humiliated by the catastrophe of the Third Reich still was able to find enough inner resources to hold out against the Soviet blockade in 1948–49, despite all the seductive offers of peace with Eastern coal and extra Russian food rations. In other words, "anti-Communism" in a most surprising and heartening

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way won—despite the handicap of yesterday's Goebbelsian propaganda against *"der Russe als Untermensch"*—its new democratic libertarian credentials. By the way, I should mention in passing here that I participated in a small West Berlin group, including Mayor Reuter and the young Willy Brandt, to make sure that the old phraseology (like *"der Russe"*) was never used; that there was always a distinction between the peoples of the USSR, who were themselves oppressed, and the Soviet régime; that, in the end, the opposition to Communism involved (and must be seen to involve) not race, nor mere nationalism, and certainly not pseudo-*Völkerpsychologie*, but a devotion to the real liberties of what Karl Popper called an open and free society.

This new resistance movement represented, at its profoundest political and cultural level, an astonishing self-confidence of democratic society in the West—imperfect but changing, growing (a little too hectically), improving (in many if not all ways), in the face of a new totalitarian challenge. It resisted and rejected the threats and blandishments of Marshal Stalin and Chairman Khrushchev; it united in alliances and agreements to create military security and economic prosperity; it defended and indeed expanded intellectual liberties and cultural diversity. All (or almost all) worked together in mutual tolerance and respect—conservatives, liberals and socialists alike: whether Reuter and Kurt Schumacher, Silone and Koestler, Bertrand Russell and Sidney Hook, Albert Camus and Raymond Aron. Apart from the totalitarian forces, old and new (the Fascist or Nazi Right, and the Communist Left), there was a general consensus. A free and vital liberal civilisation, stretching westwards from the Brandenburg Tor for some ten thousand miles, was—for all its faults, shortcomings, and evils—worthy of our support. We were proud, optimistic, self-confident, and fairly united. Out of the so-called "Cold War" came a European renaissance. Let us not forget it, or overlook it.

IN THE SECOND PERIOD I have referred to, the very word "consensus" became another dirty word. One of the classic totalitarian philosophies made a surprising comeback, as young persons in universities and in the young nationalist movements of the Third World turned to the illiberal principles of Marxist Revolution. The once fortunate front of democratic forces in the West began to disintegrate. Men on the Left began to see the "seeds of fascism" in every conservative; conservatives began to detect totalitarian tendencies in every socialist; and as for the men in the centre, they began to lose confidence in the middle way, the way of moderation, gradual change and a decent respect for a mixed and various way of reconstructing

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A Last Chance

With the exception of the USA and Canada (which the vagaries of the pound have fortuitously spared), the price of ENCOUNTER will be going up with the next (November) issue. This is our first price increase since June 1981.

If you live anywhere but in the USA and Canada, and are not already a subscriber, it will pay you to become one now. Up to 31 October 1983 we can accept subscriptions at the existing rates shown on page 1 of this issue. (Needless to say, we would love American readers to celebrate their good luck by subscribing too!)

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social institutions. We have become afflicted with a plague of mutual recrimination.[2] Those famous lines of Yeats became the clichés of the day:

Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
. . . anarchy is loosed upon the world . . .
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.

In the upsetting, aggravating, wounding arguments put by Alexander Solzhenitsyn from his embittered Vermont exile, the West has been overcome by a sudden strange blindness, or at least astigmatism. It no longer recognises the total monstrous evil of the Gulag Archipelago. It flounders in its own social and economic problems, confused and unnecessarily conscience-stricken. It no longer knows how to answer the slogans of a new ideology of race, violence, terror, dictatorship, especially when, like the lion with the lamb, a peaceful togetherness is promised. One knows the anxieties of war and peace today; but of what value is a half-century's anguished thought on the "Russian question" when all the lessons of the past are so easily overlooked by another generation? As Saul Bellow has said, "A great deal of intelligence can be invested in ignorance when the need for illusion is deep."

The Double Trouble

London

COMING HOME I have been, for the moment, distracted by the passing agitations of the election campaign. (I note that among my old British friends on the Labour Left the disorientation is far more extensive than among the mere ideologues in Germany: Denis Healey, once an anti-Stalinist cold-warrior *par excellence*, now no longer is a staunch NATO defender and opines that Reagan's America is too anti-Communist, and Roy Hattersley goes along with the break-up of Western Europe's Common-Market unity. . . .) Still, one must get around to confronting the basic implicit question—namely, *why* in the last three decades we have witnessed a time of hope and a time of despair, a time of construction and a time of confusion, a time of certainties and a time of doubt and distress, a time of verbal clarities and of semantic ambivalence. Space limits being what they are, even for an Editor, I shall restrict myself to emphasising the one special factor to which I have paid, perhaps, inordinate attention: the matter of intellectual style.

I have never stopped wondering over all these decades why it is so difficult for a Western intellectual to recognise both the virtues and the vices of the European-American pattern of society in which he lives, to think through its problems and processes and thus reach positions from which he can both defend and criticise, preserve and create anew. He need not be wedded to any narrow national shibboleths or vested interests. He can defend prosperity and criticise its materialism. He can stand up for his own personal liberty (bourgeois liberty, possibly) and still desperately want its extension to the oppressed and enslaved. He can believe in the achievement of what is called Atlantic civilisation (Dr Hobsbawm laughed in Frankfurt at this usage, but I let it pass, he being so obviously one of its beneficiaries), and still know that no man is an island unto himself and no culture an ocean to itself; I accept that there are always before us the Indian Ocean and even the Yellow Sea as symbols of larger engagement. Alas, this is too rarely the case. Western intellectuals are often either defensists or defeatists. The one sees virtues to be proud of; the other detects only vices to be ashamed of. The one tends to be too complacent, the other too alienated.

I was once reminded by the late and lamented Rebecca West of an old aphorism: The trouble with man is two-fold . . . He cannot learn truths which are too complicated. He forgets truths which are too simple.

[2] Bernard Levin has recently, in his column in *The Times* (London, 26 July), recalled a characteristically grotesque Anglo-German moment in this period of the early 1960s: ". . . when Willy Brandt addressed the Labour Party conference and rashly expressed a belief in a West willing to resist the Soviet Union some of them shouted 'Nazi!' at him."

ENCOUNTER—A NEW LOOK

The next issue of ENCOUNTER—November, published on 20 October—celebrates our 30th anniversary and will appear in our redesigned and larger format. (See also our "Last Chance" announcement on p. 93).

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LETTERS

"Alpha, the Moralist"

IN YOUR May issue you carry a letter, with several distinguished signatories, about the charges brought against members of the now dissolved KOR in Poland. This appeared about ten days after the death of Jerzy Andrzejewski, the novelist who was a co-founder of KOR.

When an East European writer of his stature dies, one might expect the event to gain some attention in our national newspapers. In fact, apart from a reasonably substantial obituary in *The Times* (21 April), it was barely mentioned in passing. I should therefore be grateful for space to make a number of points.

I found it regrettable that even the *Times* obituary, quite comprehensive on the literary side, did not refer to what was perhaps Andrzejewski's most celebrated expression of opposition to imported tyranny in East Europe. This was his open letter to Edouard Goldstücker, Chairman of the Czechoslovak Writers' Union, after the Soviet invasion in 1968, conveying his own "most profound solidarity", as well as "the support of the vast majority of Polish writers, for whom the words truth, love, loyalty, hope, patriotism, and progress have not yet died, or have not changed into a heavy burden. . . ." Andrzejewski's message attained due international prominence when it was published in the Yugoslav paper *Borba* (26 September 1968).

The *Times* obituary-writer quoted two or three phrases, describing Andrzejewski, from an essay of Czeslaw Milosz, though without mentioning that these were taken from *The Captive Mind* (published in 1953 and reissued after the award of the Nobel Prize in 1980) in which Andrzejewski is identified only pseudonymously as *"Alpha, the Moralist."* Worthy winner of the Nobel Prize as he was, I cannot help but think that Milosz would have done better, in republishing this penetrating work, to revise his concluding judgment of Andrzejewski (even if only in a footnote) in the light of the latter's courage and outspokenness in the years that had intervened.

If your readers are at all interested in the ambiguous attitude of the Polish authorities towards important but inconvenient writers and artists, an admirable essay on the whole question of censorship in post-war Poland appeared in the Spring 1975 issue of *Index on Censorship*. This was written by Renata Hammer (the pseudonym of a Polish writer who had left the country not long before), and *inter alia* deals in some detail with the vicissitudes Andrzejewski went through in seeking (unsuccessfully) to publish his last major work, in the early 1970s.

Finally, these ambiguities seem to have pursued Andrzejewski even in death. It was reported that his funeral was attended by KOR sympathisers and genuine writers, but also that today's Minister of Culture "sent a wreath to the ceremony and was represented by a Deputy Minister."

The example of Andrzejewski is particularly poignant; let us hope that it will continue to be instructive.

PETER M. THOMPSON

London

In Defence of CND

ONE OF THE RITUALS of CND demonstrations is that there is usually an aeroplane hovering overhead, funded (like ENCOUNTER) by ill-defined but resolutely pro-American sources. The plane trails a slogan through the skies: "CND = Communism Neutralism Defeatism." This sums up Alun Chalfont's view of CND so aptly that one wonders why it was necessary for you to devote twenty pages to his article "The Great Unilateralist Illusion" (April 1983). The slogan in itself would have been sufficient.

Lord Chalfont rehearses the arguments against unilateralism as if his subject were still the insular British CND of twenty-five years ago. The campaign against nuclear weapons is vigorously supported throughout western Europe. It is reinforced by the Nuclear Freeze movement in the United States and by the independent peace groups which are emerging in Warsaw Pact countries like Hungary and East Germany. British unilateralism has *multilateral* international implications.

Chalfont seems to believe that this phenomenon is to be explained as a communist-led conspiracy. E. P. Thompson (he reveals) was until 1956 a member of the Communist Party. And there is scarcely a member of the CND hierarchy who does not belong to "the extremist Left." Such arguments are of course the mirror image of Soviet denunciations of their own unofficial peace movements as the agents of capitalist imperialism. They do not begin to engage with the more fundamental reasons for the resurgence of the anti-nuclear movement.

The main reason is the accelerated sophistication of nuclear weaponry. People have suddenly woken up to the fact that the arms race is running out of control. SS20, Cruise and Pershing do not simply "modernise" an existing and relatively stable "balance of terror." They carry us beyond deterrence into an unstable strategy of counter-force and first-strike weapons. The British Government's own Trident programme will give a vicious upward twist to the spiral of escalation. For some reason Chalfont barely mentions the Trident decision, although this provided probably the most important stimulus to the resurgence of CND. Those who voted against the Conservative Government's Nuclear Missile programme in the General Election were not the members of some Communist pressure group. They were middle-of-the-road supporters of the Labour, Liberal and Social Democratic Parties.

A second main factor is the collapse of confidence in the leadership of the Western Alliance. Before Chalfont denounces the campaign against nuclear weapons as "anti-American", he should reassess the American leadership which he is urging us to follow. One moment President Reagan is denouncing Soviet communism as a satanic force of evil, and the next he is calling on the Kremlin to embrace his proposals for a total renunciation of theatre nuclear weapons. The Western negotiating position has forfeited all credibility. It is difficult to think of any American president who has done greater disservice to the cause of *détente*. The utterances of the British Prime Minister have been similar in tone. One does not have to be a communist in order to believe that no substantial progress can be made towards improved East-West relations until both

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Reagan and Thatcher have been removed from office.

One of the functions of CND is to reassure the governments and peoples of Eastern Europe that we do not all share the bellicosity of the Thatcher and Reagan administrations. Far from undermining disarmament negotiations, the Western peace movements provide evidence that there *is* some goodwill and a genuine desire for *détente* on the Western side. The famous "Walk in the Woods" episode at Geneva suggests that the Soviet leadership may be willing to accept a compromise which would set limits to SS-20s, as well as Cruise and Pershing. But how is such an agreement to be facilitated? By anti-Soviet rhetoric? Or by a peace movement which demonstrates that ordinary people in the West are in favour of an end to the nuclear arms race?

It is hard to see why this movement should be denounced as "sterile" and "nihilistic." This is not Newspeak. It is defamation.

E. F. TIMMS

Gonville and Caius College
Cambridge

Peace, Politics & the Church

I HOLD NO BRIEF for Mgr Bruce Kent, who can defend himself. But Lord Chalfont's attempt to set him in contradiction with Catholic teaching requires some comment. He triumphantly flourishes (ENCOUNTER, April 1983, p. 21) a quotation from an "encyclical" which says that "nobody who desires to save Christian civilisation from extinction should render it [atheistic communism] assistance in any enterprise whatsoever." Q.E.D. But he should have given the date and the author of this encyclical: *Divini Redemptoris*, 19 March 1937, was written by Pius XI.

It appears to have escaped Lord Chalfont's notice that a later encyclical by John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, 11 April 1963, has superseded *Divini Redemptoris*. Pope John made a distinction between the error (always to be condemned) and those who err (always to be respected). He added that there could be a gap between communist theory and its practice, which might contain "good and commendable elements." Whether the time for cooperation had arrived, and what forms it might take, were "matters for prudence to decide." So one can argue about that.

But one cannot deny that any form of Manichaeism has been abandoned. Consequently Bruce Kent's remarks about "profound anti-communist feeling" being "at variance with Christian teaching" are perfectly justified. Nor do they entail the absurd conclusion that Kent holds that "Christianity is compatible with communism." Lord Chalfont should recall what Archbishop Oscar Romero of San Salvador, later martyred, told John Paul II: "In my country it is very difficult to speak of anti-communism, because anti-communism is what the right preaches, not out of love of Christian sentiments, but out of a selfish concern to preserve its own interests."

Lest Lord Chalfont imagine that I am another victim of the great conspiracy, let me assure him that I am anti-Marxist and anti-communist. But I can recognise necessary distinctions. It is almost a definition of a "smear" that it fails to make them.

PETER HEBBLETHWAITE

Oxford

Replies

I WAS NOT AWARE that one encyclical could be "superseded" by another. However, as Mr Hebblewaite rightly says there is room for argument here. One does not need to be a theologian to conclude that if Mgr Bruce Kent believes that profound anti-Communist feeling is at variance with Christian teaching he must surely believe that Christianity is not incompatible with Communism.

So far as Mr Timms is concerned, I do not expect to achieve much from a debate with someone who believes that the peoples of Eastern Europe need reassuring that "we do not all share the bellicosity of the Thatcher and Reagan administrations"; and if Mr Timms really believes that the Cruise missile is a first-strike weapon, he should do a little more homework. Arguments based upon false premises, however logically developed, seldom lead to sound conclusions.

ALUN CHALFONT

House of Lords
Westminster

IT IS STRANGE that Mr Hebblethwaite should quote Pope John XXIII's great Encyclical *Pacem in Terris* to justify Mgr Bruce Kent's remark that "the Churches are handicapped by profound anti-Communist feeling—at variance with Christian teaching." For if perhaps that statement—or "smear" (to use currently fashionable jargon)—was true of the Roman Catholic Church before the 1963 Encyclical, it has certainly not been so subsequently and has not for a longer time been true of other churches such as the Church of England and the Methodists.

Pope John in his encyclical emphasised that decisions about forms of cooperation (with Communists) are possible "for political ends which are honourable and useful: these are problems which can only be solved with the virtue of prudence, which is the guiding light of the virtues. . . ." If, then, Mgr Kent's cooperation with the Communists in CND is based on *Pacem in Terris*, it can only be that he attributes to them the same "honourable and useful political ends" as his own. But in view of the consistent aim of Communist peace movements, which is always and everywhere to promote Soviet policy, such an assumption would seem to be imprudent, contradicting all previous experience. Mgr Kent may wish to ban Cruise and Pershing missiles from Europe merely in order to check the nuclear arms race. For the Soviet government, and for the Communists and fellow-travellers who support it, the primary aim must be the disruption of NATO and its deterrent.

This being so, to impute a "smear" to Lord Chalfont—or even to Cardinal Bruno Heim with his less diplomatic language about Mgr Kent and his associates—is to extend that much-abused term to cover plain common sense.

MAURICE LATEY

London

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Life & Letters Today

New York City

ILLEGITIMATE IDEOLOGY: **His uncontrollable temperament keeps John McEnroe's tennis career continuously interesting. In his match yesterday in the Forest Hills semi-final against the Czechoslovak star Tomas Smid he exploded once again, threw a ball at him, and shouted "Communist bastard!" The umpire, Mr Zeno Pfau, fined him $1.00.**

WELT AM SONNTAG

London

CROSSWORDITIS?: *You suggest* **"cruciverbophile"** *for a crossword devotee, to be guilty of the cardinal sin of Epinology—***viz,** *hybrid coinage. The accepted rule is to stick to one language at a time, usually Latin or Greek. If one insists on Latin, then it would have to be something like* **"cruciverbicultor"** *but it is much more usual for words for enthusiasts in any particular pursuit to be coined from Greek, in which the corresponding word would be* **"staurologophile."**

What worries one more as a logophile is the heading on the letter created by your epicephalographer, namely, **"Crosswordit is."** *Why do journalists think that obsessions with any particular subject can be made into a paranoiac disease by adding the suffix* **itis** *to the subject noun, a suffix which, in medical terms, implies inflammation?*

On second thoughts [writes J. W. Clifton, Chairman of the Queen's English Society] I am often "inflamed" by the inept clues of your **Staurologosurraptists** *so perhaps I suffer from* **Crosswordit is.**

DAILY TELEGRAPH

"GOLLYWOG . . . A black (male) grotesque doll, with staring eyes and fuzzy hair."

OXFORD ENGLISH DICTIONARY

London

GOLLY IN JAM: The marmalade jar golliwog is in a sticky situation again over race relations.

The mascot loved by generations of children is the star of a new nationwide advertising campaign for jam-makers James Robertson & Son. But their posters on the prime-site hoardings have angered critics who say the golliwog symbol is "racist."

One advertisement features a sad, pink-faced golliwog with the caption: "Some marmalades get their colour from artificial colouring." Next to him is a happy, black-faced golliwog with the message: "Robertson's Golden Shred gets its colour from Seville oranges."

Robertson's marketing manager in Manchester, Mr Andrew Neble, insists: "We've had no complaints from any quarter about our latest campaign. In fact, quite a number of people have asked for copies of the posters. . . ."

Mrs Ann Thompson, chairman of the National Committee on Racism in Children's Books, who tried three years ago to get the trademark dropped, said yesterday: "Any form of golliwog image is totally unacceptable to black people."

DAILY MAIL

Budapest

NO GOULASH: **D.H. Lawrence's novel "Lady Chatterley's Lover" went on sale in Hungary for the first time, and by Wednesday all 59,000 copies were sold. But the newspaper "Magyar Hirlap" questioned the fuss over the book whose alleged obscenity kept it out of Hungary for decades. "Many buyers were a bit disappointed because the obscene story is really a lyrical description of a great love", it said.**

INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE

Ottawa

M/M FOR MURDER: *French immersion programmes are among the initiatives taken to foster bilingualism in Canada (where French and English have been legally equal official languages only since 1969).*

There are also laws requiring goods sold in Canada to be labelled in both languages. These are so assiduously obeyed that bottles of soda water are marked **"Club Soda Club"** *with the adjective on both sides of the noun to accommodate both languages. Similarly tags showing the size of clothing bear the mark* **"M-M"** *with one* **"M"** *standing for* **"medium"** *and the other for* **"moyen".**

NEW YORK TIMES

London

NASTY DEFINED: *One of the strongest measures so far taken to try to end the trade in Video "nasties" was announced yesterday, with the introduction of a voluntary classification code backed up by the registration of Video dealers.*

Mr Norman Abbott, chief executive of the BVA, said that he had sat on the working party established to examine a code for the industry. **"I am trying to obliterate from my memory the terrible things we were subjected to. Some of the films stunned me."** *The material was called degrading muck.*

The weekly audience for sold or rented home Video products was more than seven million. Three quarters of those rented an average of one prerecorded cassette a week.

A recent survey had indicated that 2% of people who bought and 15% of those who rented cassettes chose "horror" titles, a category that included "nasties" but also covered the traditional horror film.

The definition of a video "nasty" is:

"a phrase coined by the press that generally refers to material that can include disembowelling, castration, cannibalism, and humiliation."

THE TIMES

Lisbon

FRUITY: **To attract the ecologist vote, the Portuguese Communists have founded a thinly disguised "Green" party. It's already been dubbed the "Melancia", or Watermelon party, because it's green on the outside and red on the inside.**

WALL STREET JOURNAL

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